

LWV LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS[®] OF MISSOURI

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LWV Legislative Bulletin February 3, 2020

LWV members are encouraged to personally communicate, as individual voters (not as LWV members), with their legislators on the various legislative bills. Previous issues of the Legislative Bulletin can be found at this link: <https://lwvmissouri.org/legislative-bulletin/>

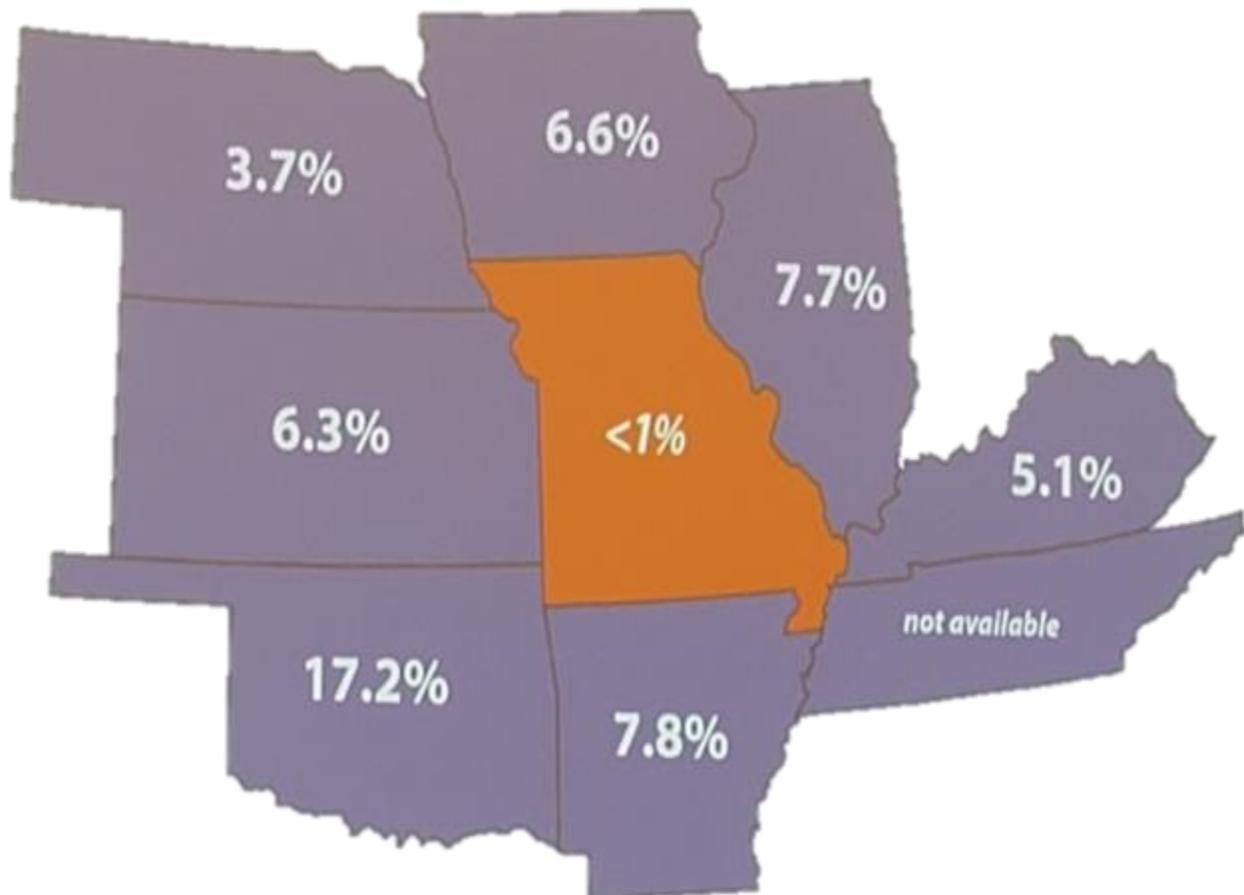
Missouri Budget

(Note: this is information provided by Rep. Deb Lavender, (D) Kirkwood)

Usually in December the governor, with consensus from House and Senate majorities, releases a CRE (consensus revenue report) which is a prediction of growth in our state for the upcoming fiscal year. At this moment there is still not a consensus from the Republicans. Governor Parson thinks our growth will be 2.2% and the House Budget Chair, Cody Smith (R-163), thinks we will only grow at .8%.

Missouri Trails the Nation in State General Revenue

FY 2019 State Revenue Compared to FY 2018



You can see on the chart that Missouri has very low growth compared to the states around us. States around us who have expanded Medicaid and invest in their state have thrived, while we in Missouri are concerned whether our economy will grow by 2.2% this next fiscal year.

For the last decade Missouri has cut taxes so much we are on the path Kansas took a couple of years ago. A conservative estimate is we have cut over \$500 million from revenue per year. This loss in revenue has prevented Missouri from adequately caring for people with disabilities, offering healthcare to people without access to employer health insurance plans, decreased the level of funding to both K-12 as well as higher education, and decreased the amount of funding for roads and bridges.

We pay state employees the least in the nation and are having trouble filling important positions in Jefferson City. Some of our computer systems are so old they still use COBOL, a computer language that has been around since 1959! This inability to upgrade our computer systems so they can talk to each other may be part of why 100,000 children have been cut off from healthcare without any good explanation this past year.

With 6 months left in Fiscal Year 2020, we need to grow by 2.75% to meet all budgeted items. (The growth for FY20 was projected to be 2% and we were short .75% for FY19, so we need 2.75% by the end of June of this year.) Currently, we are on track to meet this prediction.

Medicaid Block Grants

Information from Missouri Budget Project

The Trump administration released Medicaid guidance on January 30 that would allow states to seek a block grant or per capita funding for Medicaid. That equals cuts to Medicaid.

Changing the financing for Medicaid from a federal/state matching program to any type of capitated amount will diminish the number of people covered and leave states on the hook in cases of natural disasters, disease outbreaks, or recessions.

Meanwhile, SB 524, a Missouri bill to pursue a block grant remains on the Informal Calendar in the Senate.

Currently, the federal government provides a generous match for every dollar the state spends on Medicaid services. However, the state relies heavily on a mechanism known as the “federal reimbursement allowance” (FRA) to generate its share of Medicaid spending, minimizing the cost to state general revenue.

Under a block grant or capitated amount, the federal government would give the state a predetermined set of funds, but that amount isn’t linked to the actual cost of care in the future. Under a block grant, federal dollars would not automatically increase during times of recession or periods when there are increases in the number of people accessing Medicaid health care coverage. Instead, more of the cost would be borne by the state.

These dynamics pose the serious risk that Missouri would need to:

- Significantly increase general revenue funding just to maintain the existing Medicaid program,
- Cut MO HealthNet services significantly, or
- Reduce other programs in the general revenue budget.

More about Medicaid in Missouri

Information from Empower Missouri

On Tuesday, January 28th, the Missouri House of Representatives Subcommittee on Appropriations – Health, Mental Health, and Social Services held a hearing to help give the legislature and the public information about the current state of Missouri’s Medicaid program (also known as MO HealthNet). A particular area of focus was the significant decrease in enrollment numbers that the program has seen in the last year and a half.

Although there are differing opinions about who and what was to blame for the decrease in enrollment in Medicaid, there was universal agreement, including from Richardson, that the current system that the department uses is broken and inefficient. As with many Missouri information systems, the one that handles eligibility for benefits is outdated. According to the DSS representatives, this is because the transition to the new systems after the Affordable Care Act passed in 2014 did not happen in a timely and efficient manner. In fact, it was so poorly managed that from 2014 to 2018, the department wasn’t even using the software to track eligibility.

The department claims that the significant drop-off in enrollees happened once the system began to automatically check enrollment eligibility on an annual basis. The issue that they’ve run into is three-fold.

First, individuals may have been kicked off coverage because they are ineligible for their current program but may be eligible for another program.

Second, when a parent loses eligibility, the system automatically kicks their children off as well.

Finally, the notification process that lets someone know that they or their child has been removed is inefficient, outdated, and does not consider the realities of so many Missourians who live with low incomes.

When someone is dropped from the Medicaid rolls, they are sent a letter via snail mail letting them know. This isn’t a very efficient system for individuals with low incomes, who move frequently due to lack of access to affordable housing and may not have their mail forwarded. Rep. Lavender brought this up to the DSS representatives, asking “If [someone receiving benefits] moves and they haven’t got mail forwarding set up, how do you get a hold of them?” The answer was they don’t; they get a roughly five percent response rate to the letters.

If someone is lucky enough to receive the letter, realize that they or their child are still eligible, and re-apply, they must go through the long and tedious application process again, which includes a 63-page paper application. This process is completely unsustainable. These issues can all be solved by updating the systems the department uses to manage coverage and improving customer service. Currently, the system that tracks the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) eligibility cannot communicate with the system that tracks Medicaid eligibility, even though there is plenty of crossover. It is an old, clunky system, like many others that Missouri state government uses.

One of the biggest takeaways we gained from this hearing is the realization that, if Missouri were to expand income eligibility for Medicaid in the state, the influx of federal dollars would help to fund updates to this system. Process improvements could also be made to ensure that such significant errors, which put Missourians health and well-being in jeopardy, don’t occur.

National Popular Vote Interstate Compact

Three National Popular Vote bills were filed in this legislative session. The sponsors are Representative Ashley Bland Manlove, KC HB 1591; Representative Judy Morgan, KC HB 1949 and Representative Peter Merideth, St. Louis HB 1988. Each Rep. supports each other's bills.

These bills, all identical, if passed by states whose electoral votes total 270, will make our presidential voting system democratic where every vote in every state is equal. At present, most states give all their electoral votes only to the winner of the state race and the loser's votes are not represented in the electoral vote.

The National Popular Vote Interstate Compact will assure that each and every vote will count equally. The only way a bill passes in the legislature is for it to get the support of most of the legislators. The next step, now that there are three sponsors, is to get as many co-sponsors as possible from all over the state. This is where YOU come in.

Our goal is to get all League members to contact his or her representative by email or phone and request/persuade each to co-sponsor one or more of the Compact bills.

We have also included a sample letter to your Representative (see below) which you may use as an email or you may modify it to fit your style, or as a basis for a telephone call.

And of course, you can always go to <https://lwvmissouri.org/issues/>

We are counting on each of you to follow through on this action alert.

It's about time that our national presidential elections are fair and democratic.

From your LWVMO NPV committee,

Sydell Shayer, Chair (slshayer@gmail.com)

Linda McDaniel, Bob Allen, Angie Dunlap, Laurie Velasquez, Nancy Price, Nancy Pawol, Kathy Kane, Eve Golden, Kathleen Farrell, Dorothy Fox, Asa Kaplan, Alfrieda Anderson, Joan Gentry, Annette LePique

Dear Representative _____,

The National Popular Vote Act has been introduced in the Missouri House for 2020 via HB1591, sponsored by Rep. Ashley Bland Manlove, HB1949 sponsored by Rep. Judy Morgan, and HB1988 sponsored by Rep. Peter Meredith.

I respectfully request that you support this important initiative by co-sponsoring one or more of the filed National Popular Vote bills.

I believe the President of our country should be the person who gets the most popular votes across all 50 states. The current state-level tally of votes awards Missouri's electors to the candidate who gets the most votes in Missouri. It is not fair to citizens in any state when their individual votes are not reflected in the national count. Many people choose not to vote because they think their vote will not matter.

The current "winner-take-all" system based on only the state's vote is used in nearly all the states of our nation and has resulted in the second-place candidate becoming president five times in our history.

Under the current system, states which are closely-divided get most of the candidates' visits and attention. In swing states, voters' issues are likely addressed. For most non-swing states, like Missouri, voters' concerns are largely ignored.

The National Popular Vote Interstate Compact (NPVIC) would account for all the popular votes in all 50 states determining the President based on the national tally. The NPVIC does not change the U.S. Constitution and retains the Electoral College. The power to make the NPVIC happen lies in the state legislatures as they have the Constitutional right to appoint and direct electors. When the Missouri Legislature passes the NPV Act, our state will be joining the National Popular Vote Interstate Compact.

I believe that election of the President per the National Popular Vote Interstate Compact will give fair play to the will of voters across the nation by accounting for all votes equally from all 50 states.

There is history of bi-partisan support for the National Popular Vote in Missouri. During the 2016 legislative session, there were 52 representatives in our Missouri House who sponsored, co-sponsored, or voted "yes" in committee – it included 32 Republicans and 20 Democrats.

Sincerely,

Your Name

Address

Phone Number

You can find your state representative contact information at this link: <https://www.house.mo.gov/>