



State Representative Rep Ron Copeland District 120

CAPITOL ADDRESS:
201 West Capitol Ave
Jefferson City, MO 65101
Phone: 573-751-1688
Email: ron.copeland@house.mo.gov

COMMITTEES:
Transportation Infrastructure, Vice Chair
Judiciary
General Laws
Rules-Administrative Oversight

Missouri House Passes **HB 1413** to Safeguard Election Integrity
The Missouri House has passed **HB 1413**, a crucial piece of legislation aimed at ensuring the integrity of elections within the state. The bill introduces a requirement for Missouri driver's licenses or nondriver's licenses issued to citizens of the United States, including naturalized citizens, to bear a distinguishing mark indicating their citizenship status on the front of the license.

HB 1413 emphasizes the importance of clarifying citizenship status on identification documents used for voting. This bill specifies that the license holder is a citizen of the U.S. and would denote such through a distinguishing mark. Many Missourians believe that only citizens should be allowed to vote, and that is the intent of our current laws. We believe it should be easy for legal citizens to vote in our state, and not cheat the system.

The proposed legislation addresses existing loopholes in the law that create challenges in preventing non-citizens from voting. Certain practices by contracted Department of Motor Vehicle (DMV) services have inadvertently registered individuals who are not citizens or are otherwise ineligible to vote. By implementing a citizenship marker on identification documents required for voting, the bill aims to empower election workers to screen potential voters at polling places effectively.

Some of our current laws have a blind spot in identifying violations related to non-citizen voting. It is very difficult to verify legal citizenship, as our election authorities have no tools to do so. Non-citizens have been verified as having been placed on voter rolls, and unfortunately, most are only discovered through special circumstances.

HB 1413 not only seeks to safeguard the integrity of Missouri's elections but also aims to restore public trust in the voting process. By clarifying citizenship status on identification documents, we reinforce the principle that only eligible citizens should have the privilege of voting. This measure is vital in preserving the integrity of Missouri's elections and restoring faith in our democratic process. The bill will now proceed to the Senate for further consideration.

Missouri House Passes Legislation to Expand Access to Health Care Benefits for Farmers

The Missouri House of Representatives has approved **HB 2082**, aimed at improving access to affordable health care for farmers statewide. This legislation, backed with strong support, addresses the urgent need for accessible health care coverage in rural areas.

HB 2082 specifies that contracts offering health care benefits by qualified membership organizations, like agricultural or farm bureaus, will not be classified as insurance under state law. In 2024, Missouri joins five other states—Wisconsin, Nebraska, Alabama, Mississippi, and Florida—in considering new Farm Bureau healthcare plans.

HB 2082 represents a significant step towards providing essential health services without imposing excessive financial burdens. Expanding health care benefits through qualified membership organizations will empower the agricultural community and promote economic development in rural Missouri, and the plan for coverage with the Missouri Farm Bureau directly responds to members' needs for more tailored coverage options amid rising costs.

This bill will move the Missouri Farm Bureau and its qualified membership organizations away from the oversight of the Department of Commerce and Insurance to offer health coverage. It will operate similarly to existing models, providing members with access to competitively priced health coverage options.

With its approval in the House, **HB 2082** now moves to the Missouri Senate for further consideration.

Missouri House Passes Bill to Boost Rural Business Investments

The Missouri House of Representatives has approved **HB 2170**, also known as the "Missouri Rural Access to Capital Act," with the aim of boosting investments in rural businesses statewide. This legislation establishes a mechanism for investors to inject capital into rural funds, thereby fostering economic development and job creation in underserved regions. Key features of the bill include tax credits for investors over a six-year period, starting at 0% for the initial two years and escalating to 15% for the subsequent four years. The bill imposes an annual cap of \$16 million on authorized tax credits and mandates a rigorous application process for rural funds, requiring past investment experience, a business plan, and a nonrefundable application fee. Qualified investments must meet specific criteria regarding business size, location, and industry. The Department of Economic Development retains the authority to recapture tax credits if investment requirements are not fulfilled, and rural funds must submit annual reports on business investments and economic impact. Additionally, rural funds have the option to exit the program after six years, subject to conditions. These provisions are scheduled to expire on August 28, 2030.

HB 2170 represents a crucial initiative in revitalizing rural economies in Missouri by facilitating access to capital for mid-sized businesses in rural areas, thereby laying the groundwork for sustained prosperity and opportunity statewide. The bill underscores the significance of investing in rural communities for the future of Missouri, empowering local businesses to thrive and driving economic growth and prosperity for all citizens. Its passage signifies a significant milestone in addressing economic disparities between

urban and rural areas, supported by strong bipartisan backing and endorsements from key stakeholders, promising a meaningful impact on Missouri's rural landscape.

Missouri House Passes **HB 2142** to Expand Broadband Access

The Missouri House of Representatives has passed HB 2142, an initiative aimed at bolstering broadband infrastructure and expanding internet access to underserved communities across the state.

HB 2142 seeks to provide a tax deduction for funds received as grants to facilitate the provision or expansion of broadband internet in areas lacking connectivity. Currently, taxpayers can deduct federal grant money designated for this purpose from their state income tax. The bill extends this deduction to encompass state or local grant money, contingent upon the funds' earmarking for broadband development.

HB 2142 represents a crucial stride toward ensuring equitable access to essential broadband services for all Missourians. By incentivizing investment in broadband infrastructure through tax deductions, we are empowering communities to unlock their full potential and thrive in the digital age. Access to reliable broadband internet is not just a convenience but a necessity in today's interconnected world. The passage of **HB 2142** underscores our commitment to ensuring that every Missourian has the tools they need to compete and succeed in the 21st century economy.

Combating Catalytic Converter Theft and Modernizing Self-Storage Sales

The House of Representatives passed **HB 1948**, a significant piece of legislation aimed at modernizing the process of self-storage sales and cracking down on catalytic converter theft.

Each year hundreds of Missourians have to deal with the theft of their catalytic converter, the replacement of which can cost thousands of dollars. That's all the more reason that such thefts should carry a heavier penalty, and by increasing it, more converter thieves could end up in court based drug treatment programs, which is often exactly what they need.

Making these thefts a felony offense will allow the courts to get these individuals into drug courts, something they can't do now, while it's only a misdemeanor. A lot of time these thefts are carried out by someone who is feeding a habit.

The bill, which received approval from the House, introduces several key provisions to adapt to the changing landscape of commerce and address emerging challenges:

- **Advertising Requirements:** The bill allows operators of self-service storage facilities to advertise sales of personal property of defaulting occupants in any commercially reasonable manner, in addition to advertising in newspapers. This change acknowledges the shift in how people consume information, with more reliance on online platforms rather than traditional newspapers.
- **Catalytic Converter Regulations:** The bill introduces regulations regarding the buying and selling of catalytic converters. It requires a salvage license from the Department of Revenue for engaging in such transactions and mandates scrap metal dealers to verify the legality of catalytic converters being sold to them. Detailed records about the converters' origin and vehicle information must be maintained and submitted to the Department of Revenue.

- **Penalties for Catalytic Converter Theft:** The bill toughens penalties for knowingly purchasing stolen catalytic converters. It removes the requirement that the purchaser must know the converter is stolen and establishes a class E felony for violating these regulations. This aims to deter theft and illegal trade of catalytic converters.
 - **Expansion of Theft Offenses:** The bill establishes offenses related to stealing and unlawful possession of catalytic converters under existing theft statutes, making it a felony offense.
- HB 1948** represents a crucial step forward in modernizing our state's regulations surrounding self-storage sales and addressing the growing issue of catalytic converter theft. By embracing digital advertising methods and implementing stricter regulations, we are taking proactive measures to protect consumers and businesses alike. The bill will now proceed to the Senate for further consideration.

Missouri House Passes **HB 2432** Providing Clarity and Relief for Senior Citizens on Property Taxes

The Missouri House of Representatives took a significant step toward providing clarity and relief for senior citizens across the state by passing HB 2432. This bill, which aims to modify the criteria for seniors to qualify for a real property tax credit, garnered overwhelming support from lawmakers, reflecting a bipartisan commitment to supporting Missouri's elderly population.

HB 2432 addresses the current ambiguity in the law by clarifying the eligibility criteria for seniors to receive real property tax credits. Under the provisions of the bill, eligible taxpayers must be Missouri residents aged 62 or older, have ownership or equitable interest in a homestead, maintain liability for property taxes, and have no delinquent taxes owed to the county. These amendments are designed to streamline the process for seniors to access the tax relief they deserve.

This bill emphasizes the importance of offering relief to seniors while also addressing the challenges faced by counties in implementing the existing law. This is an important move to ensure that our seniors receive the support they need to thrive in our communities. We are putting it in the peoples' hands by providing clarity and simplifying the eligibility criteria for property tax credits, we are empowering our elderly population to age with dignity and financial security.

Missouri House Extends Authority for Hazardous Materials Fee Collection

The Missouri House of Representatives has passed legislation extending the authority of the Missouri Emergency Response Commission to collect fees for handling hazardous materials and chemical emergency preparedness in the state. **HB 1870** aims to prolong the existing fee collection framework, providing critical funding for emergency response efforts.

The current statute in Missouri sets forth a structure for collecting fees from employers managing hazardous materials over a six-year period. **HB 1870** seeks to extend this timeline from August 28, 2024, to August 28, 2030, ensuring sustained support for chemical emergency preparedness initiatives. Under the current statute, fees collected from employers handling hazardous materials are allocated for chemical emergency preparedness purposes, facilitating contingency planning, training, public notices, and more. The legislation mandates coordination between relevant agencies and committees to ensure effective emergency planning and response efforts statewide.

Extending the authority for hazardous materials fee collection is a crucial step in ensuring the safety and preparedness of our communities. These fees are levied on hazardous materials transporters, including trucking and gas pipelines, and play a vital role in maintaining our state's readiness for any unforeseen incidents. A significant portion of these fees goes towards training our local firefighters in handling hazardous materials, spills, and cleanup procedures. This legislation builds upon existing frameworks that have been in operation for years, simply adding another six years to the timeline. With the looming expiration date this year, it's important that we act quickly to get this done.

Designating Branson as "Live Entertainment Capital" of Missouri

The Missouri House of Representatives passed a bill this week, **HB 2320**, proposing to acknowledge Branson, Mo., as the "Live Entertainment Capital" of the Show-Me State.

Nestled in the picturesque Ozark Mountains, Branson has long been celebrated as a top-tier tourism destination, attracting visitors nationwide with its lively entertainment scene and diverse attractions. Its extensive history of live performances, spanning music shows, comedy acts, and theatrical productions, has solidified its reputation as a haven for entertainment enthusiasts of all ages.

Designating Branson as the "Live Entertainment Capital" of Missouri aims not only to honor the city's rich heritage but also to catalyze economic growth, benefiting both Branson and the entire state. It is anticipated that this recognition will draw even more visitors, thereby boosting tourism revenue and generating fresh opportunities for local businesses and performers.

Branson shines as a jewel in our state's crown, offering unmatched entertainment experiences that exemplify the finest in Missouri hospitality and creativity. Through the approval of **HB 2320**, we affirm Branson's standing as a premier destination for live entertainment, further cementing its role as a crucial driver of economic prosperity for our state.

Passage of **HB 2320** would immortalize Branson's reputation as the "Live Entertainment Capital" of Missouri in state law, marking a significant milestone for the city and its residents.

I enjoyed all visitors who dropped in this week; and please always feel welcome to drop in when you are visiting the Capitol, or call the office if we may be of assistance to you.



Mary and Leslie from Riverways Pregnancy Help Center



Impact 100 Bill Lang, Kathryn Lang, Kathy Lasley, Doug Lasley and Sen. Elaine Gannon



Mr. Keaton from Missouri Independent Cattlemen's Association and Rep. Bennie Cook

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