



## State Representative Rep Ron Copeland District 120

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### **House Signs Off on Comprehensive Crime and Public Safety Legislation**

I am pleased to share with you the recent passage of **House Bill 2700**, a significant piece of legislation I sponsored that focuses on enhancing public safety and addressing critical issues in our state.

I filed this bill with the intent of helping to improve our efforts in combating crime with a strong emphasis on protecting our citizens and supporting law enforcement efforts. This legislation is the result of bipartisan collaboration involving my colleagues in the House and individuals with diverse experiences within our justice system, all united in the pursuit of making Missouri a safer place for everyone.

One key provision of this bill increases penalties for the sale of certain controlled substances that result in great bodily harm or death, addressing a serious gap in accountability. It's about holding individuals accountable for the harm caused by these substances and ensuring justice for victims.

Additionally, the legislation establishes a violent offender registry, increases penalties for specific offenses like careless discharge of firearms and impaired driving resulting in death, and introduces measures to protect vulnerable individuals and children in our communities.

This bill also includes provisions to address various issues such as mental health disorders, prostitution, and support for families of those who have lost their lives in the line of duty. It expands diversion programs for DUI cases and enhances witness protection measures.

Furthermore, **HB 2700** introduces innovative solutions, including the establishment of a fund to support the Office of the Public Defender, aimed at improving our criminal justice system and fostering safer communities.

I am committed to prioritizing public safety and ensuring that Missouri remains a place where everyone can live and work without fear. This legislation is a significant step towards achieving that goal, providing opportunities for individuals to rehabilitate and turn their lives around while ensuring accountability for those who break the law.

With this bill, we are working together to strengthen our communities and make Missouri a safer place for all.

### **Missouri Legislature Passes HB 2634, Preventing Medicaid Funding Going to Abortion Providers**

In a significant development for Pro-Life efforts in the Show-Me State, the Missouri General Assembly this week passed legislation aimed at preventing abortion clinics from receiving Medicaid reimbursements.

**HB 2634** would make it illegal for public funds, including Medicaid reimbursements, to support abortion facilities or their affiliates, while granting taxpayers and the Attorney General the right to take legal action to enforce these provisions.

House Bill 2634 simply codifies in our statutes that we will not allow abortion providers or their affiliates to be reimbursed through our state's Medicaid program. The bill also amends an existing statute, requiring MO HealthNet participants to

obtain services only from qualified providers and empowering the Department of Social Services to revoke contracts with providers found unqualified due to specific offenses. Additionally, the bill prohibits reimbursement to abortion facilities under the "Uninsured Women's Health Program".

With the passage of this bill, we are saying that taxpayer dollars will not be used to pay for abortion. Medicaid funds will remain dedicated to senior citizens, disabled persons and those in financial need pursuant to Missouri law. We in the Missouri legislature stand for the most vulnerable members of our society, for those who have no voice. Today, the unborn have a voice.

### **Missouri House Passes Increased Penalties for Sexual Offenses Involving Children**

The Missouri House of Representatives overwhelmingly passed legislation to put a measure before Missouri voters to ensure the safety of Missouri children and curb the heinous crime of sex trafficking by strengthening penalties for sexual offenses involving children.

**HJR 132** proposes a crucial amendment to the Missouri Constitution to ensure stricter punishment for those convicted of sexual trafficking of a child in the first degree. Under the proposed amendment, individuals found guilty of sexual trafficking of a child in the first degree will face life imprisonment without the possibility of probation or parole. This legislation was created with the intention of ensuring that the punishment for these crimes is both just and effective. Our children deserve the highest level of protection, and this resolution underscores our unwavering dedication to their safety and well-being. With the passage of this legislation, we are sending a powerful message to traffickers: their actions will not be tolerated. Our children are not commodities; they are our most precious treasures, deserving of every safeguard we can provide.

**HJR 132** now waits in the Senate for further consideration.

### **Missouri House Passes Amended SJR 74, Heads Back to Senate for Further Review**

The Missouri House of Representatives has made a historic move by passing **SJR 74**, which proposes crucial changes to the state constitution in an effort to enhance the integrity and transparency of the constitutional amendment process.

**SJR 74** aims to refine various provisions pertaining to constitutional amendments, addressing key concerns regarding voter approval thresholds, foreign influence in initiative petitions, voter eligibility, and the review process for proposed amendments. Under the resolution, an initiative would need to win a statewide popular vote and a majority in at least five of the state's eight congressional districts.

This legislation will strengthen the constitutional amendment process in Missouri. This bill still ensures that a simple majority of the votes cast decides an election; however, this legislation requires a concurrent majority of five of the state's eight congressional districts to approve any constitutional amendments or initiatives. This simply seeks to ensure that we are getting a truly fair representation of the state. The amendments made reflect our commitment to upholding the integrity of our state's constitution and ensuring that the voices of Missourians are heard.

After careful consideration and debate, the Missouri House passed **SJR 74** with amended language that would curb any potential foreign activity in the initiative petition process, reflecting the collaborative effort of legislators to ensure that the proposed amendments align with the best interests of Missourians while prohibiting any outside influence.

Our House language reinforces safeguards against noncitizen voting and prohibiting foreign involvement in initiative petitions, ensuring that Missouri's electoral processes remain untainted by outside influences. In passing this legislation, we are standing for democracy and accountability, and saying once and for all that our constitution is not for sale.

The resolution now heads back to the Senate, and if approved, heads to the Governor's desk. With his signature, the resolution would be put before the voters for approval.

### **Missouri House Passes HB 2797, Honoring Local Heroes with Memorial Highways and Bridges**

In a unanimous 150-0 decision, the Missouri House has passed **HB 2797**, a bill that underscores the state's commitment to honoring its local heroes by designating various highways and bridges after them. The bill received overwhelming

bipartisan support and aims to pay tribute to the remarkable contributions and sacrifices made by individuals who have served their communities and country with valor and distinction.

The legislation began as an effort to honor fallen Police Officer Lane Burns, who was fatally shot while responding to a disturbance at a motel. Despite being wounded, Officer Burns and his partner returned fire, killing the assailant. Officer Burns, survived by his children and fiancée, served with the Bonne Terre Police Department for five years.

After some work, the bill now designates highways and bridges in memory of esteemed individuals such as Dr. Dan Brown, Police Chief Mason Griffith, Sheriff John Harlow, Sheriff Roy Patterson, and many others, spanning various counties including Phelps, Gasconade, Barton, Jasper, and more.

Among the highlights of **HB 2797** are:

- Designation of the "Dr. Dan Brown Memorial Highway" in Phelps County
- Designation of the "Police Chief Mason Griffith Memorial Highway" in Gasconade County
- Designation of the "Sheriff John Harlow Memorial Highway" in Barton County
- Designation of the "Constable W Earl Gowdy Memorial Highway" in the city of Liberal in Barton County
- Designation of the "Sheriff Charles LaRew Memorial Highway" in Cedar County
- Designation of the "Patrolman E.O. Bray Memorial Bridge" in the City of Carthage in Jasper County
- Designation of the "POW/MIA SSG Paul Hasenbeck Memorial Highway" in Osage County

HB 2797 not only acknowledges the sacrifices of public servants and military personnel but also celebrates the legacies of families and individuals who have left an indelible mark on their communities. **This includes the designation of the "Dillard Family Highway" in Dent County** and the "Cotton Fitzsimmons Memorial Highway" in Pike County, among others.

The Department of Transportation will oversee the installation and maintenance of appropriate signage for these designated highways and bridges. While the costs for signage on some memorials will be covered by the Department of Transportation, others will be funded through private donations, exemplifying the community's involvement and support for these meaningful tributes.



I presented HB 2700 on the House Chamber floor, making our communities safer.

This bill is a comprehensive criminal justice bill, that was presented to the Senate Judiciary Committee.



Our Capitol building is stunning in the springtime- I encourage you to visit this office anytime.



I was honored to visit with Jadwin Volunteer Fire Department at their recent banquet.

To see legislation mentioned in this report, go to <https://house.mo.gov/LegislationSP.aspx>

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