



## State Representative Rep Ron Copeland District 120

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Week eight has been very busy with legislation, committee hearings, and special events in your State Capitol!

### **Tightening Down Immigration Laws**

In a recent session of the House Special Committee on Homeland Security, discussions centered around several immigration bills and how to strengthen border security while ensuring that individuals entering the state are doing so through lawful ports of entry.

**HB 2470** addresses illegal entry, categorizing it as a class B misdemeanor with potential escalation to a class E felony for repeat offenses. The bill introduces additional offenses for illegal aliens and outlines penalties. Certain individuals enforcing these offenses are protected from arrest or detention in specific locations.

**HB 2523** defines the offense of trespass by an illegal alien, classifying it as a class E felony for individuals aged 18 or older committing certain offenses on public or private land. The bill exempts federally authorized individuals, and a violation does not establish probable cause for any other offense.

**HB 2367** specifies that illegal aliens committing offenses are guilty of trespass, with severity depending on the initial offense. Trespass is a class E felony for infractions and a class C felony for misdemeanors or felonies. The punishment for trespass is in addition to the initial offense's penalty and does not apply to federally authorized individuals.

The discussions reflect heightened concerns over immigration and border security at both the federal and state level. Within days of the hearing, Governor Mike Parson announced the deployment of resources and personnel to the southern border in support of Texas Governor Greg Abbott's Operation Lone Star mission.

## **Defending Religious Freedom**

The Special Committee on Government Accountability recently conducted a hearing on two bills seeking to defend Missourians' First Amendment rights concerning their faith and religion.

**HB 1959**, also known as the "Missouri Religious Freedom Protection Act" focuses on protecting religious freedom. The bill would prevent public officials from shutting down meetings or services held by religious groups.

Presenting his bill before the committee, the bill sponsor stressed the importance of places of worship, especially during times of crisis. "Our places of worship operate in a very unique way in this state, and we as government should not be in the business of trying to shut them down," he said.

## **Debate on DEI Funding**

The House Committee on General Laws recently discussed five bills centered on the use of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) language. The primary objective of these bills, as highlighted by their sponsors, is to cease the allocation of taxpayer funds towards DEI initiatives within state bureaucracy. The intention is to defund DEI efforts and prevent the state from encouraging private sector adoption of DEI practices to secure state contract bids.

One notable bill, **HB 2567**, introduced the "Do No Harm Act," which imposes limitations on DEI initiatives in medical higher education institutions.

Another bill, **HB 2569**, prohibits state departments from utilizing funds for DEI programs that endorse preferential treatment or necessitate private sector DEI adoption for state contracts. Two other bills, **HB 2619** and **HB 2448**, share similar provisions by preventing state departments from funding intradepartmental DEI initiatives and limiting mandates on private sector DEI programs for state contracts.

Similar to **HB 2569**, **HB 2365** bars state departments from financing intradepartmental DEI initiatives and enforcing private sector DEI programs for state contracts while emphasizing adherence to employment laws.

## **Jaxx's Law**

**HB 2578**, heard by the House Committee on General Laws this week, introduces "Jaxx's Law," a legislative response to a legal dispute surrounding the death of a pregnant Missouri Department of Transportation (MoDOT) worker, Kaitlyn Anderson. The bill prohibits businesses in Missouri and state agencies from considering an unborn child as an employee in civil actions, particularly those involving wrongful death.

## Increasing Penalties for Break-ins and Theft

Newly proposed legislation in Missouri is advocating for stronger laws in response to a perceived lack of safety in residential neighborhoods. The bill sponsor for **HB 1510** says groups of individuals are routinely going through neighborhoods in south St. Louis County seeking opportunities to steal from homes and cars. This typically involves pulling door handles on multiple cars, looking for those that are unlocked. The legislator contends that current state statutes are insufficient, resulting in inadequate penalties, especially for juvenile offenders. The proposed bill seeks to establish a new offense related to unlawfully gaining entry into a motor vehicle, making it a class E felony with potential imprisonment and fines. The bill also suggests expanding the definition of second-degree burglary to include unlawful entry into a vehicle with the intent to commit a felony or theft, with enhanced penalties for firearm-related offenses.

To search for more information on these bills, go to: <https://house.mo.gov/default.aspx>

We had many guests in our office this week! Please always feel free to drop by when you are in the Capitol!

I was pleased to celebrate Missouri FFA Week with members of the Missouri Cattleman's Association and members of Ash Grove FAA

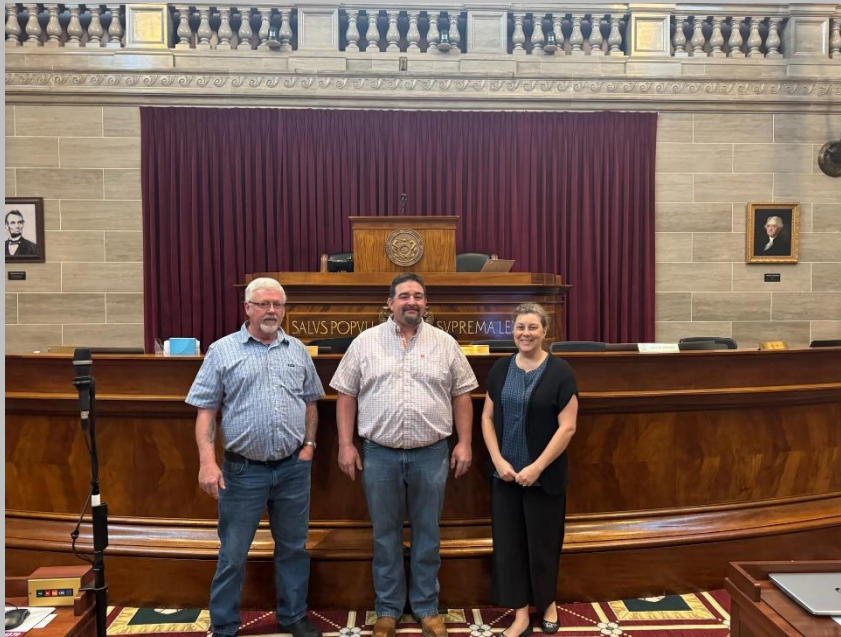




The members of Salem and Steelville FFA are pictured in the House Lounge



I had a great visit with Salem city officials, Shawn Bolerjack and Tammy Koller



Oregon County Officials visiting the House Chamber



Oregon County Presiding Commissioner visited the office



The After School Program from Van Buren was well represented!

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