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Representative Tila Hubrecht's Capitol Report - Friday, January 13, 2017

JANUARY 16TH 2017 BY DEE LOFLIN

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Missouri Welcomes New State Leaders

Thousands of Missourians from across the state made their way to Jefferson City this week to join in the festivities as the state welcomed its new statewide officials. During the November elections Missourians elected Republicans to fill the statewide positions on the ballot. On Monday, Missourians saw Eric Greitens sworn in as the 56th governor of Missouri. Joining him as statewide office holders are Mike Parson, who was sworn in as Lieutenant Governor; Jay Ashcroft, who takes over as Secretary of State; Josh Hawley, who is Missouri's new Attorney General; and Eric Schmitt, who will now serve as the State Treasurer. They join Nicole Galloway, who currently serves as State Auditor. Galloway is the only Democrat currently holding one of the six statewide posts in the executive branch, and was appointed to the position following the passing of Tom Schweich.

House members participated in events throughout the day including an interfaith prayer service and a ceremony to recognize Missouri's heroes. Those in attendance for the salute to heroes heard from the mother of a Navy SEAL who was killed in Afghanistan. She talked about the heroism of veterans and the importance of patriotism. Greitens talked to the crowd about the importance of recognizing the efforts of the best representatives of the Missouri people.

After being sworn into office, Greitens delivered a short address where he talked about the need to work together to move Missouri forward. As he told a crowd of thousands, “For decades, Missourians have talked about change. Now it’s time to fight for that change.” He added, “Our state’s world famous motto, ‘Show me’, reminds us that Missourians don’t much value big talk. Our state’s great history reminds us that Missourians have always understood that big achievements demand hard work. ‘Show me’ doesn’t mean ‘Give me.’ It means ‘prove it can be done, and we will do it.’”

Greitens followed his speech by issuing an executive order banning lobbyist gifts for executive branch officials. The order also prohibits employees in the governor’s office from leaving their jobs to become lobbyists.

That evening, members joined the governor for the Inaugural Ball in the Capitol rotunda. Legislators and their families descended the staircase outside the governor’s office as they were formally introduced as members of the Missouri General Assembly. Governor Greitens and his wife then kicked off the ball by dancing to the Missouri Waltz. The festivities continued with a performance by country music recording artist, and Missouri native, Sara Evans.

Right-to-Work Legislation Begins to Move through the House

House Speaker Todd Richardson made it clear in his Opening Day address that the Missouri House would move quickly to pass a Right-to-Work bill. In just the second week of the 2017 legislative session, the House Economic Development Committee met to discuss five similar legislative proposals, which supporters believe are vital to efforts to spur job creation and economic growth in Missouri.

The committee met Tuesday afternoon to take testimony on the bills that would prohibit employers from:

- requiring employees to join or refrain from joining a labor organization;
- requiring employees to pay any money to a labor organization; or
- requiring employees to pay any charity or third party the equivalent of money required to be paid by members of a labor organization.

All five sponsors testified before the committee to detail the benefits of the proposals. They highlighted the importance of giving workers the freedom to decide whether to join a union, and the increased level of accountability that union members would see from their unions as a result. As one sponsor said, “The change is simple. The union will now have to provide a service worth paying for to their members. They are no longer guaranteed members regardless of service or value, so they will have to work for them

just as the union member works for their paycheck.”

Supporters also focused on the economic benefits that other states have seen after implementing Right-to-Work. They echoed the comments of House Speaker Richardson, who said in his Opening Day Address that, “Since becoming a Right-to-Work State in 2012, Michigan has added 58,000 manufacturing jobs. While over the last two years Missouri has lost about 1,200 manufacturing jobs. And what’s more, Michigan’s average weekly wage isn’t declining; it is growing at almost twice the rate of Missouri’s.”

State Treasurer Eric Schmitt also spoke in support of the measures along with the state’s top business groups. Schmitt noted that Missouri is in fierce competition with other states for jobs and that the Show-Me State needs to use every tool in the arsenal to attract new businesses. He said he has met with site selectors and being a Right-to-Work state is at the top of the list of the things they consider when looking for a new location for their companies.

Those who oppose the idea of making Missouri a Right-to-Work state also showed up to make their voices heard. Opponents referred to the proposal as an overreach of government and an impediment to the rights of employers and employees. They said companies and their employees should be able to negotiate without government interference. Opponents also disputed the economic benefits generated by Right-to-Work. Furthermore, they said voters should be allowed to decide whether Missouri should become the nation’s 28th Right-to-Work state.

The House Economic Development Committee combined the five bills into a single measure and then approved the legislation by a vote of 8-4. The bill then received the approval of the House Rules – Legislative Oversight Committee Thursday afternoon. House members are set to discuss the proposal on the House floor next week.

House Gives Initial Approval to Gift Ban

A state House proposal aimed at banning gifts from lobbyists to elected officials received first round approval from the Missouri House of Representatives Thursday. HB 60 is nearly identical to a gift ban proposal filed in 2016, which was passed out of the House with 147 votes in favor.

House Bill 60 is meant to help restore the public’s trust in elected officials by limiting the influence of lobbyists. As the sponsor said about the bill, “We are trying to eliminate the undue influence of lobbyists on legislators in the building. That is the individually, personally consumable gifts from lobbyists to legislators. These are the one-on-one

dinners; these are the press boxes at sporting events in the state. That's what we're trying to limit."

In addition to the prohibitions on expenditures by lobbyists for elected officials, the bill would remove reporting requirements that would not be necessary with a ban in place. It would exempt from those prohibitions flowers and plants given as expressions of condolence or congratulations. It would also exempt items such as plaques given to lawmakers when they are recognized by an organization.

The bill would allow lobbyists to provide meals that are offered to all members of the House and Senate, as well as all statewide elected officials. The bill includes a requirement that an invitation to those elected officials be made in writing at least 72 hours before the event.

House Speaker Todd Richardson has said he wants the gift ban bill to be the first thing the House sends the Missouri Senate this session. As the Speaker told his colleagues during his Opening Day address, "Missourians want a government they can trust and believe in. Last year we passed the first meaningful ethics reform in modern Missouri history, and we must continue the job we started."

The bill now requires one more successful vote in the House before moving to the Senate.

House Committees to Look at Missouri's Regulatory Framework

Two state House committees are preparing to dive into the state's framework of regulations and licensing requirements in an effort to make it easier to own and operate a business in Missouri.

House Speaker Todd Richardson announced in his Opening Day address that he has instructed the House Committee on Government Efficiency and the House Committee on Professional Registration & Licensing to review those requirements. Richardson said Missouri regulations have slowed the success in Missouri of ridesharing companies like Uber and Lyft and lodging companies such as HomeAway and AirBnB. As he said in his Opening Day speech, "It is past time that Missouri had statewide frameworks for disruptive technologies and allowed private enterprise to function in a free market."

The chairman of the House Committee on Professional Registration & Licensing said tempering business regulations is a balancing act. As he said, "We have a responsibility to protect the individuals across the State of Missouri, but yet when the scale moves too far the other direction – when regulations become burdensome to business, that aren't really effectively serving that purpose of protecting the public; it's our responsibility to

step in and pare those back to where we effectively meet the needs of protecting the public while, however, not being overly burdensome to businesses across the state.”

The chairman of the House Committee on Government Efficiency said it could be a multi-year process to vet all the regulations and requirements that are in place. He said, “Having these committees working hand-in-hand is going to be an asset for every person that’s either trying to get a job or to create a business that creates jobs in the state.”

Also this week, Governor Eric Greitens signed an executive order to put a freeze on new government regulations that could hurt businesses and families. The executive order bans state agencies from creating new regulations through the end of February. Any new proposed regulation would need to get the approval of the governor before taking effect. Additionally, the governor’s executive order calls for a review of all current regulations.

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