



Legislative Update

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LEGISLATURE TO REMAIN OUT OF SESSION NEXT WEEK

Legislators completed action on the supplemental budget this week. It remains unclear when the session will resume, but both the House and Senate will remain out of session next week.

Under the Constitution, the Regular Session will end on May 15, and action on next year's budget during the Regular Session must be completed by May 8. The House has adjourned until a technical session on Friday, April 17 and will not have regular session activity next week. The Senate has adjourned for this week and will hold a technical session next week on April 13.

Given the health concerns over large gatherings, legislators had to take extraordinary measures to even complete actions on the supplemental budget bill this week. Senate committee members met in the largest available space, wore masks and maintained social distancing. When approving the Senate changes, House members were called to the chamber in groups of four and then entered the chamber one at a time to vote at their desk and then exit on the opposite end of the chamber.

Given the uncertainty regarding the impact of the pandemic on state revenues, legislators are likely to need to make significant changes to the budget plan considered last month by the House Budget Committee.

The Governor may need to call a special session in June to finish next year's budget. The Governor could also ask legislators to consider action on other priorities specified in the call for the special session.

BUDGET ACTIONS COMPLETED FOR SUPPLEMENTAL AND HEALTH CARE PROVIDER TAX EXTENSION

The legislature completed action on two budget measures on April 8. The House adopted the Senate version of HB 2014 (Smith), the supplemental appropriations bill for the remainder of this fiscal year. The Senate approved the House version of HB 2456 (Smith), the bill to extend the sunset on the Health Care Provider tax. This tax is a key component of the state budget and helps draw down federal Medicaid funding.

Both bills are now Truly Agreed To and will be sent to the Governor for his approval. The House has adjourned until a technical session on Friday, April 17 and will not have regular session activity next week. The Senate has adjourned for this week and will next meet on April 13.

The final version of HB 2014 includes numerous amendments provided by Governor Parson to increase COVID-19 related spending in HB 2014. The amendments primarily create significant new authorization for expenditure of federal funds anticipated under the recently approved federal CARES

Act relating to the impact of COVID-19. The bill includes \$300 million in CARES funds federal spending authority for K-12 public schools. Roughly \$210 million of this is expected to be provided to public schools through Title I funding to be used for various COVID-19 funding needs.

The House adopted special operating procedures regarding social distancing in order to meet April 8 and take up and pass the Senate version of HB 2014. The procedures provided that no more than ten individuals could be on the House floor at any one time. Members were called from their offices in groups of four and allowed into the chamber one at a time to vote. Most House members wore face masks while in the chamber.

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