



Depending on your perspective, action in the Capitol this week was either wildly successful or horribly misguided. If you lean towards the more conservative side of things, you'd probably be fairly pleased with the results of the week. If you find yourself more liberal, you'd be less than satisfied. Regardless of your position, it's safe to say that both Chambers tackled some highly-charged and controversial issues this week, with education being the focus of both the upper and lower legislative bodies.

On the Senate side of things, the upper chamber tackled a couple of lightning rod issues that roiled some even within the majority party. SB 51, the COVID Liability protection bill that provides some measures of protection for health care providers, ultimately passed but the emergency clause that bill proponents deemed absolutely essential failed despite significant efforts by the bill handler, Senate leadership, and multiple influential special interests. Senate leaders had been waiting for Sen. O'Laughlin to return to the Capitol to ensure enough votes for the emergency clause. But the emergency clause fell short of the 23-vote threshold needed, despite a 20-13 vote on the underlying bill (led in part by uber-conservative Sen. Bill Eigel). Despite the failure to adopt the emergency clause, the bill was sent to the House for consideration where it is expected to receive swift action. In other significant Senate action, the chamber took up SB 55 (a sweeping education bill that expands charter schools) and SB 26 (a bill that makes criminalizes protestors who block streets and provides protection for police officers under investigation). Both bills drew hours and hours of floor debate for marathon Senate sessions this week, with Sen. O'Laughlin laying over SB 55 before the Senate was able to vote on the measure and SB 26 being passed after debate and sent to the House.

In the House, the lower chamber also took up a controversial education bill sponsored by Rep. Christofanelli. HB 349, also known the "education savings account" bill, provides a mechanism for a tax credit for individuals who contribute to an "education savings account" that would be pooled together and used for tuition, books, and tutoring. The concept is that donors to the ESA's would leverage the tax deduction similar to how developers leverage the Low Income Housing Tax Credit. Thus, children living in poor-performing school districts would be eligible to use the fund to pay for tuition at private schools. The bill was so controversial that it passed the House with only one more vote above the margin required for passage, with reports that Speaker Rob Vescovo was strong-arming reps into voting for the measure to get it out of the House. Like the Senate, the House also took up measures relating to first responders, passing HB 59, which creates penalties for individuals posting information about first responders (namely police officers).

For both chambers, the deadline to fill new bills is March 1st. A flurry of bills were filed this week, with legislators trying to get their last minute priorities crafted into legislative language before the clock runs out. Several of those new bills filed have an impact on

APRNs, including HB 1159, HB 1211, & HB 1224. To date, the House has filed 1,457 House bills while the Senate has filed 598 bills. There will no doubt be substantially more legislation filed through the end of the session in the form of amendments, committee substitutes, and floor substitutes. Your lobbying team will be watching closely for any harmful language and work to identify opportunities to attach beneficial APRN language to other moving legislation.

Specific to APRN legislation, Sen. Jeanie Riddle this week hinted that she would try to force a vote on SB 8 (the unnecessary and ill-suited "truth-in-advertising bill that AMNP has vehemently opposed) on Monday, March 1st. While AMNP has had numerous conversations with senators on the committee that have pledged their vote in opposition to the bill, AMNP and our nursing partners will continue to work to defeat the bill until such time as it does not have adversarial language. We will keep you updated on any developments.

In other non-Capitol news, former House Speaker Todd Richardson, currently serving as the Director of Medicaid, announced this week that he would be taking a leave of absence to spend more time with his family. Richardson was appointed to the position by Gov. Parson in 2018, and has been instrumental to the administration's efforts to respond to COVID-19. The temporary leave comes at a time when lawmakers are set to implement policies to expand Medicaid in response to the ballot initiative mandate passed by voters in 2020. An acting director has not yet been named.

Additionally, Gov. Parson announced this week that Phase 1-B, Tier 3 of the COVID vaccination plan will begin in mid-March. This round of vaccines will primarily focus on teachers, child care providers, and grocery store and utility employees. Estimates suggest that this will enable over a half million new people that were not previously eligible.

Although no new developments surfaced this week in the case against Rep. Patricia Derges (the assistant physician who was indicted for fraud), an article surfaced in Medscape that casts doubt on the role of the Assistant Physician license that was devised and heavily promoted by the Missouri State Medical Association. To read the article, please click here: [Stem Cell Fraud Case Sparks Concern Over Unmatched Docs' Role \(medscape.com\)](https://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/944444)

Please watch your emails this week for urgent requests for action if we feel that additional calls or emails are necessary. **It is quite possible that we may need you to make urgent calls on Monday afternoon so please make sure to pay close attention and respond immediately if needed.**

As always, if you have any questions or we can help you in any way, please don't hesitate to reach out to us at nursepractitioners@missourinp.org. We value your membership in AMNP and are doing everything we can to fight for you and your patients. Thank you for investing in your profession, your association, and your future of practice.