



Great Northwest Day at the Capitol

Legislative Priorities 2023

- ✓ **Infrastructure** (including Broadband)
- ✓ **Education**
- ✓ **Workforce** (including Childcare)
- ✓ **Housing**

✓ **Infrastructure** (including Broadband)

Safe and reliable infrastructure is essential to the health and wealth of our region. Great Northwest Day encourages lawmakers to invest in our rural region's roads, bridges, water and wastewater projects – vital keys to the economic future of northwest Missouri. Broadband is currently one of the most critical components in attracting talent; without competitive internet speeds, our rural communities cannot attract new residents. Sufficient internet leads to prosperity, because of continued access to education, commerce, healthcare, precision agriculture, and much more.

WHAT can be done to help:

1. Do not give responsibility for lettered highways to county commissioners for maintenance as county budgets are even tighter than state budgets.
2. Support innovative funding efforts to expand high-quality replacement of outdated infrastructure assets.
3. Establish a fund specifically for lettered routes.
4. Continue to provide aid to qualified, local internet providers deploying broadband access in unserved/underserved rural areas, while redefining the definition of underserved to be 100Mbps down and up.
5. Ensure future-proofing technology is used in broadband deployment.
6. Improve broadband adoption efforts in rural households.
7. Continue to support/fund the Office of Broadband (Including the Governor's request for \$250 million to continue broadband expansion)
8. Draft legislation to exempt broadband grant funds from state income tax.

✓ Education

The future of the state and our region depend on a skilled and educated workforce. Educational districts and institutions contributing to the development of Missouri's next generation of citizens, from preschool through multiple postsecondary options such as professional certificate and degree programs, cannot fulfill their mission without your support. Collectively, we ask legislators to make increasingly larger investments in education and workforce development for the purposes of stronger communities and better employment opportunities.

WHAT can be done to help:

For Elementary and Secondary Education:

1. Support rural and small public schools with a significant funding increase to the "Small Schools Program". **HB2**
2. Support the governor's FY2024 recommendation, at minimum, for the foundation formula. **HB2**
3. Continue supporting increases for PreK programs and PreK special education programs. **HB2**
4. Continue to support the expansion of broadband throughout Missouri, for distance learning purposes and the myriad other benefits provided by having access to reliable internet services. **HB7**
5. Continue to support efforts to address teacher pay and teacher shortages. *(For example, support the forgiveness of student loans for students pursuing a degree in teaching at a Missouri state institution).*

For Higher Education:

1. Seek and support an increase to core appropriations in House Bill 3 for each public higher education institution for the purpose of keeping up with inflationary costs. **HB3**
2. As the legislature has asked the Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development to prepare a report evaluating potential funding models and reforms for higher education, please support policy changes that take into account the unique mission and challenges that each two-year and four-year institution has in our state.
3. Support the Governor's request for \$275 million for transformational capital projects.
4. Support opportunities that maximize state and federal funds for deferred maintenance needs on each public campus.

✓ Workforce (including Childcare)

One of the most challenging issues facing rural Missouri is a diminished workforce. Typically, rural labor markets have very low unemployment rates; however, they also suffer from lower than average labor force participation rates. In order for rural areas to thrive, there must be an emphasis placed on increasing labor force participation, as well as expanding the labor force (through marketing rural living). Focusing solely on labor force training does not adequately address the workforce needs of rural Missouri. Access to affordable childcare is a major workforce issue for our region and the State of

Missouri. If parents do not have safe, reliable, affordable childcare, they are unable to work. Childcare is a fundamental Workforce and Economic Development issue.

WHAT can be done to help:

1. Establish Rural Workforce needs via a study/assessment of rural labor markets.
Suggested: Study and assess rural labor markets to establish a rural workforce.
2. Create a task force to evaluate the barriers to rural labor force participation.
3. Create an incentive for employment – (create a personal tax credit/tax deduction for people entering the labor force and maintaining employment) – program to be focused on cities and counties with below average labor force participation rates.
4. Create and implement a statewide Rural Living marketing plan with an emphasis on career opportunities, entrepreneurship and a great work-life balance.
5. Create an employment retention program – codifying the ability for local communities to create Employment Incentive District (EID) - similar to a CID or NID. An EID would provide funding for a locally controlled Employment Incentive Program; which could include employment retention grants, employment relocation grants and workforce housing down payment.
6. Fund the Office of Childcare sufficiently to fill open positions and expand its services.
7. Simplify and streamline the application and licensing process for new childcare centers, the fingerprinting process, and the childcare enrollment forms.
8. Support the Governor’s proposed child care related tax credits.
9. Renew the free fingerprinting program.

✓ Housing

If rural areas are to retain and grow population, adequate workforce housing must be a focal point in redevelopment efforts.

WHAT can be done to help:

1. Establish an Office for Rural Housing – focus would be on statewide evaluation of rural housing and research into best practices from other states.
2. Support and expand of the low-income tax credits (with a 35% minimum to be spent in rural areas) – expand the Missouri Low Income Housing Tax Credits to include “workforce housing” projects that are rent to own, or have an ownership plan.
3. Create legislation that allows for tax exempt bond financing tied to owner occupied housing developments within qualifying census tracts (rural or economically depressed areas) – local control.
4. Create a fund for down payment assistance (could be funded through a reallocation of Missouri Works funds from businesses to their employees – if authorized by the business).
5. Create a tax break for employer contribution to a down payment fund for employees (similar to retirement and/or health insurance).



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LEGISLATIVE BILLS TO WATCH 2023

✓ Infrastructure (including Broadband)

Infrastructure: *SB191, SB96, SB231, SB242, SB259, SB260, SB385*

Broadband: *HB98, HB309, HB461, SB25, SB71, SB219*

✓ Education

SB8, SB306, HB675, SJR18, HB3, HB2, HB7

✓ Workforce (including Childcare)

Workforce: *SB92, SB163, SB53, SB54, SB175, SB310, HB417*

Childcare: *SB3, SB151, SJR26*

✓ Housing

SB237, SB284, SJR36

✓ Other Bills to Watch

SB69 - Establishes the Office of Entrepreneurship

SB138 - Requires MODED to promote Missouri Hardwood Forest Products

SB143 - Establishes tax credit for development of a grocery store in food deserts

SB237 - Adds four seats to the Missouri Housing Development Commission Board

SB413 - Establishes 50% tax credit for angel investors making an investment in a qualifying Missouri business

HB311 - Establishes the 21st Century Innovation Hub Task Force