

THE **WATCHDAWG** REPORT

Missouri General Assembly 2023

The Legislative season is over. The Republican Super Majority in Jeff City showed once again that they are not consistently Republican, let alone Conservative. Did they do some good things, yes. Did they do horrible things? Also, yes.

Shenanigans by those running for governor were evident in the “who can and cannot buy land in Missouri Bill, HB 903. Jay Ashcroft is on the record in the past for being in favor of allowing outside ownership, but suddenly wanted language that protected all Missouri land, not just farmland put in this bill. Eigel wanted the version that protects only farmland so as not to give Ashcroft the talking point during the election season...exhausting. Seen any Chinese owned Smithfield processing plants lately? I have.

The overwhelming existence of lobby-controlled legislators in our General Assembly is turning our state Purple, on its way to Blue. If that’s not what you want, you’ll need to pay attention and connect the legislative season to the election season. Stop believing what they say, they lie about being Conservative and about paying attention to their constituency of voters as opposed to donors. We have control if we will only step up.

The more low-information voters that a candidate can influence with signs, commercials, and social media influence paid for with campaign funds, the more likely they will be elected on name recognition, especially if they are an incumbent. Most voters don’t know their voting record, or what bills they sponsored. Elections cannot be won without money, and big money comes from lobbyists and donors with expectations. The solution is educated voters and conservative donors. Know the goal!



Camden County

If you live under a rock and haven’t heard, there was a most unusual Commissioner’s meeting on May 2nd. The contract between the County and Ozark Amphitheater to enable County Deputies to work concerts was on the agenda. If you haven’t read the transcript of the meeting at amongthedogwoods.blog, we suggest you do. Most commission meetings are covered by Dave Maupin who owns this blog, and it is always excellent information...not to mention the opportunity to enjoy Dave’s most excellent sense of humor. Lake TV has also picked up this story, and we hope their investigation will continue.

Camden County and Ozark Amphitheater will sign a contract that provides for deputies to work at the venue during concerts. Commissioner Gohagan asked a question about a couple of paragraphs covering indemnity in the contract. Later, County Attorney Green said the language was appropriate. At first mention of looking deeper into the language of the agreement, Sheriff Tony Helms decided to throw a fine fit and attacked the Commission for interfering in decisions best left to the Sheriff. He verbally attacked Commissioner Gohagan personally. All of which was completely out of line. As the turmoil unfolded, it became clear that Sheriff Helms is protecting his turf regarding other venues who use deputies without written contracts. Shady Gators was mentioned. He said that the deputies who had worked there are off duty, then he said they were reporting to him, but mentioned that Shady Gator’s pays them directly. His vitriol directed at the Commission, and specifically Commissioner Gohagan, for entertaining the possibility setting forth rules about how deputies may or may not be made available to private business was telling. Also important to note that only the Amphitheater has a written agreement with the county.

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We hope the Commission will immediately terminate all verbal agreements across the county. It's a very bad look when a private bar business where drugs and trafficking are possibilities is paying uniformed county deputies for private security while they are reporting directly to the Sheriff...which is exactly how Sheriff Helms described the verbal agreement. The appearance it gives is that the business has some control of what's "policed", and what's ignored. The more reasonable approach is for the business owners to hire their own private security, and then any citizen who witnesses illegal behavior can confidently call the county deputies to enforce the law and protect the public. Currently, it looks to customers like law enforcement already knows and may not respond to all crime on the premises. We're not saying that any lake business would condone criminal behavior. We're saying that local citizens and visitors deserve to be 100% comfortable that they have layers of private security around them, and unincumbered police action when necessary. We are comfortable that paying for excellent security staff will not overly affect any bar venue's bottom line. It should be a budgeted expense.

We're very curious to know what other venues have verbal agreements with the Sheriff without a contract or approval by the Commission. Just how "good ole boy" does this get? We encourage the Commission to quickly put an end to this behavior.

Commissioner Ike Skelton did good work to bring the meeting back to order and attend to the business at hand. We hope he's working in the background to investigate and put each of these verbal security agreements on the Commission's agenda. Our opinion is that it is best to suspend deputy activity at these venues until there is a review. Any "private security by deputy" service by the county is suspect and should be considered only if the scenario aligns with the Amphitheater agreement, and the Commission decides to enter into written agreements with these businesses. Decisive action now gives everyone involved time to make necessary arrangements for security before Memorial Day weekend.

County Audits – The report on the first phase of the forensic audit confirmed that while there are some updates to the Collector and Treasurer process that will enable necessary reconciliation, the amounts coming into the Collector's office and disbursed out through the Treasurer's office do basically align. It appeared that under current policy, there is not a monthly reconciliation rolling up into annual reconciliation that identifies discrepancies that may need attention. Forensic audit team MDD explained in detail how the revenue database is ever-changing, and how monthly snapshots in time can be used for reconciliation based on an understanding of the delayed flow of revenue associated with disputes and other delays. It was not ascertained that mistakes were made in the county offices. Process improvements that will facilitate monthly reconciliation through the year were recommended. Wait...did they say PROCESS?

Do we have documented processes for these departments? No. We have policy...no processes. Our commissioners and other office holders do not understand the difference, and resist learning about process development. **If you who read this have process experience in your past work life, please write them a note.** They are so tired of hearing this from only me, and I'm very tired of repeating what can easily be verified with research on any search engine. I've spoken about it, emailed about it, will write it again here:

This Commission and the elected office holders could excel in county management by implementing good ole corporate "Managing by Process Improvement" strategy across the county offices. This strategy is based on the understanding that employees do their best, and most problems lie in the process (the steps they follow to do the work) which currently is not clearly defined by broad-based "policy". Properly set up and maintained processes would be an amazing return on a bit of time invested to help employees better document how they really get the work done, and to objectively measure success. The cost is zero because the normal workflow is not disturbed. It helps employees by enabling a better understanding of their work by managers, the Commission, and the citizen stakeholders who fund all. The "it's the way we've always done it" Purchasing Department would be the most beneficial first step. Because that's where lack of a good process costs us huge amounts of taxpayer dollars and prevents transparency. Think of every purchase that's been awarded with only a single bid submitted; the prime example is \$4.7 million to Veregy. Employees can't know what they've not been shown, and elected office holders who haven't worked corporate don't know these strategies. Get educated. Google it! Remember consulting free-for-nothing helpful experts in the community? We're here. Ask Randy G. to head a committee to review.

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26 House Bills were passed out of 1142 that started in Committees.

19 of the 26 were budget appropriations bills.

7 of the 26 pertained to something other than the budget.

33 Senate Bills were passed out of 871 bills of various types proposed.

We have a super majority Republican General Assembly. Is it unreasonable to ask that the Republicans go into the session with a pre-ordained agenda to pass the bills regarding the topics their constituents are interested in? Apparently, it is. **We've got to make changes.** Step one is to find worthwhile candidates that will stand against the lobbyists and old-guard RINOs. Step two is to document and distribute voting records and information on bills proposed by the current set of corrupt legislators.

For our own Senator Bernskoetter and Representative Thomas – where were your bills to protect personal freedom, e.g., SB 49 from Senator Moon without the caveat regarding only public funding; conservative positions on cronyism, e.g., fighting against SB 94 that sets up tax credits for entertainment companies; and education legislation that means something because it removes DESE's influence on our schools. For that matter, look at everything sponsored by Senator Jill Carter. Be like Jill.

Here's an excellent example of how the game is played. Representative Justin Hicks was famously videoed standing up to a fellow African American Representative by maintaining that he identified only as an American. Bless him for that... and for recognizing that playing the race card is passé and ridiculous. At the same time, this new Representative sponsored HB1165 that changes the Uniform Commercial Code in a way that sets the table for Federal Digital Currency. We've been warned about these bills coming to state legislatures by Conservative watchdogs. It's happening under our noses in Missouri by a young, charismatic Republican Representative from Lake St. Louis who may have years in front of him to pass this horrible legislation. Shame on him. I hope his constituency wises up and strongly primaries him at the next election.

Passed bills are listed on page 4. I hope you will take the time to go to senate.mo.gov and house.mo.gov and read the summaries. The summaries are very helpful as we all know the actual bill language is impossible to understand. I am particularly perturbed about SB 34. This is a Democrat bill that's setting up religious classes to be taught as Social Studies curriculum. Does anyone else see the problem?

Where are the Senate and House Leaders that are willing to enforce the law and adhere to one bill – one title – one issue? Senator Bernskoetter's SB 20 was so heavily amended, one amendment changed the name of the bill so all the other amendments could be added. I do not know if that was the play from origin, but there should not be a way to change a bill name once in the system. Sponsor a second bill with the new name to add all the other garbage.

We need to link the lessons learned from this legislative season to election season 2024, to vet better candidates. Educate yourself, then attend candidate events in 2024 and ask the tough questions and carry the response back to your neighbors. It is worth our time to replace legislators that have succumbed to the "it's never going to pass so why fight for it" conditioning. We need courageous legislators, now more than ever. Where is the Senator and Representative that will sponsor the bill to outlaw lobbying in Missouri? How about paper ballots in Missouri? Why can't all self-proclaimed Conservative Legislators get together and focus on making just these two things happen? We need people who can see it, commit to it, and run on it...ready to walk in the door with those two bills ready to submit...no matter the cost, the pressure, even the threats. You can help. We need candidates for 2024. Who do you know?

[SB 13](#) - [Crawford](#) - Modifies provisions relating to financial institutions
[SB 20](#) - [Bernskoetter](#) - Modifies provisions relating to retirements
[SB 24](#) - [Hough](#) - Creates the "Missouri First Responder Mental Health Initiative Act"
[SB 25](#) - [Hough](#) - Authorizes an income tax deduction for certain federal grant money
[SB 28](#) - [Brown \(16\)](#) - Modifies provisions relating to access to public records of the Missouri highway patrol
[SB 34](#) - [May](#) - Authorizes school districts to offer elective courses on Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament
[SB 35](#) - [May](#) - Modifies provisions relating to the suspension of licenses for failure to comply with a child support order
[SB 39](#) - [Thompson Rehder](#) - Establishes guidelines for student participation in athletic contests organized by sex
[SB 40](#) - [Thompson Rehder](#) - Modifies provisions relating to background checks
[SB 45](#) - [Gannon](#) - Modifies provisions relating to health care
[SB 49](#) - [Moon](#) - Establishes the "Missouri Save Adolescents from Experimentation (SAFE) Act" and modifies provisions relating to public funding of certain gender transition procedures
[SB 51](#) - [Eslinger](#) - Modifies provisions relating to physical therapists
[SB 63](#) - [Roberts](#) - Creates new provisions relating to financial institutions
[SB 70](#) - [Fitzwater](#) - Modifies provisions relating to professional licensing
[SB 75](#) - [Black](#) - Modifies provisions relating to retirement systems
[SB 94](#) - [Hoskins](#) - Establishes tax credits for the production of certain entertainment
[SB 101](#) - [Crawford](#) - Enacts provisions relating to property and casualty insurance
[SB 103](#) - [Crawford](#) - Modifies provisions relating to judicial proceedings
[SB 106](#) - [Arthur](#) - Modifies provisions relating to public health
[SB 109](#) - [Bernskoetter](#) - Modifies provisions relating to mining
[SB 111](#) - [Bernskoetter](#) - Modifies provisions relating to the administration of state employees
[SB 116](#) - [Brown \(16\)](#) - Modifies provisions relating to the disposition of the dead
[SB 127](#) - [Thompson Rehder](#) - Enacts provisions relating to the designation of infrastructure
[SB 138](#) - [Eslinger](#) - Requires the Department of Economic Development to promote Missouri hardwood forest products and modifies provisions relating to foreign ownership of agricultural land
[SB 139](#) - [Bean](#) - Establishes the "Stars and Stripes Historic Region of Missouri"
[SB 157](#) - [Black](#) - Modifies provisions relating to professions requiring licensure
[SB 167](#) - [Brown \(26\)](#) - Specifies the means by which a medical examiner's certificate may be provided to the state when applying for a commercial driver's license or instruction permit
[SB 186](#) - [Brown \(16\)](#) - Modifies provisions relating to public safety
[SB 189](#) - [Luetkemeyer](#) - Modifies provisions relating to criminal laws
[SB 190](#) - [Luetkemeyer](#) - Modifies provisions relating to tax relief for seniors
[SB 227](#) - [Coleman](#) - Modifies provisions relating to the culpable mental state necessary for a homicide offense
[SB 398](#) - [Schroer](#) - Enacts provisions relating to motor vehicles
[SCR 7](#) - [Bernskoetter](#) - Creates the America 250 Missouri Commission
[SJR 26](#) - [Fitzwater](#) - Authorizes a property tax exemption for certain property used for childcare
[HB 1](#) - [Smith](#) - Appropriates state funding for public debt
[HB 2](#) - [Smith](#) - Appropriates state funding for the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
[HB 3](#) - [Smith](#) - Appropriates state funding for the Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development
[HB 115](#) - [Shields](#) - Modifies provisions relating to licensing of health care professionals
[HB 131](#) - [Griffith](#) - Allows for payment of state employee salaries every two weeks
[HB 202](#) - [Francis](#) - Repeals provision related to regulation of industrial hemp
[HB 402](#) - [Henderson](#) - Modifies provisions relating to health care
[HB 417](#) - [Henderson](#) - Creates incentives for encouraging certain individuals to obtain employment-related skills
[HB 447](#) - [Davidson](#) - This bill about adult education was spoiled by last minute amendments sponsored by Planned Parenthood that effect school children. Our Rep. Lisa Thomas voted NO, yeah! **Please call Governor Parson's office at 573-751-322 and demand a veto!**
[HB 802](#) - [Dinkins](#) - Authorizes the conveyance of certain state property

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