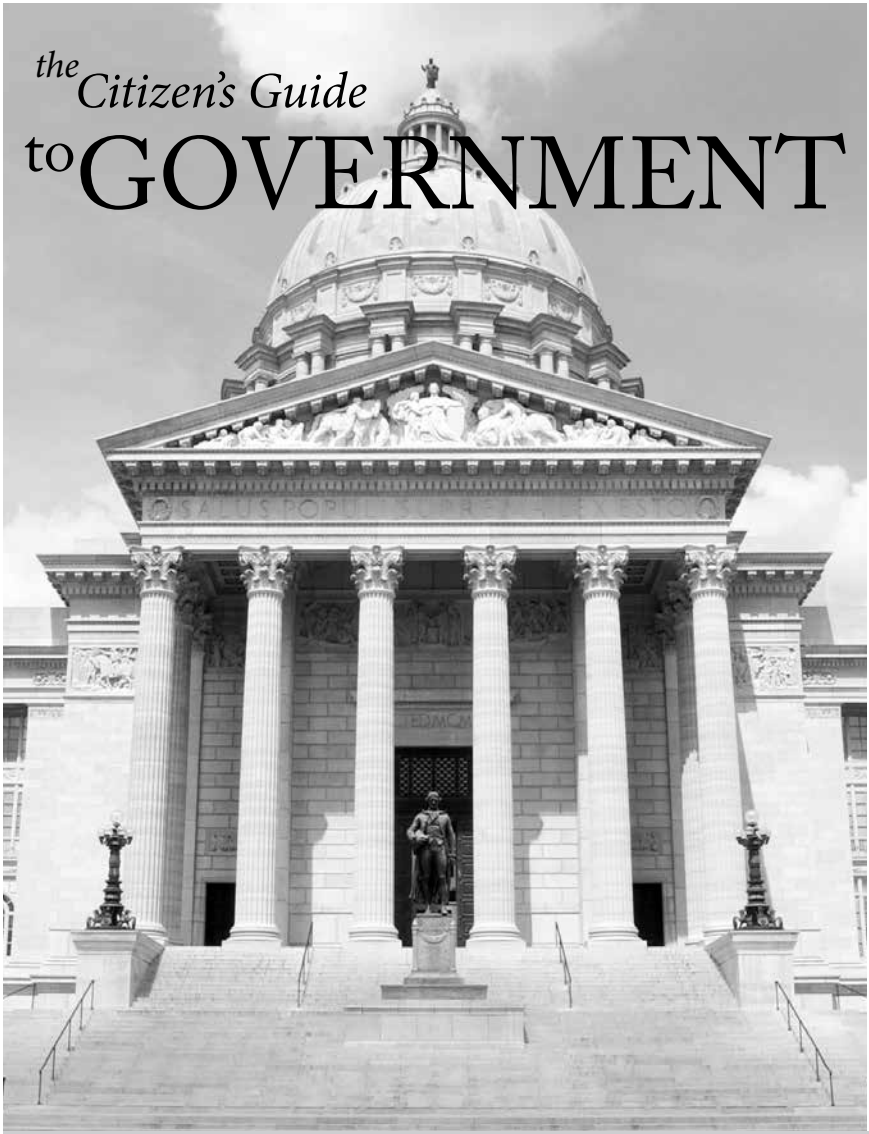
the Citizen's Guide to GOVERNMENT



FROM STATE REPRESENTATIVE

MIKE MOON

DISTRICT 157

MISSOURI HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MIKE MOON

State Representative • District 157

STATE CAPITOL
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Dear Friend,

Government is the tool by which we ensure our voices are heard when it comes to making decisions that will affect our lives. As citizens, we have important roles to play in determining the laws that guide our city, county, state, and federal governments.

It is important for every citizen to become involved in the governmental process. Knowing how government works is essential to participation. I hope you will use the information contained in this booklet to be a more active, informed, and involved citizen.

I hope you find this guide helpful. If I can ever provide assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me by calling, emailing, or stopping by my office.

As always, it is an honor and privilege to serve you.

Your State Representative,

Mike Moon

COMMITTEES

Vice-Chair: Ways and Means
Appropriations - Agriculture, Conservation, and Natural Resources
Professional Registration and Licensing
Property, Casualty, and Life Insurance

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HOW CAN CITIZENS BECOME INVOLVED IN THEIR GOVERNMENT?

The Citizen's Role

Although not everyone can be involved in politics to the extent of holding public office, there are a number of effective ways for citizens to make their views known.

A group of voters may draft a proposed law and require that it be submitted to the people for passage through an initiative, a process in which advocates collect signatures from registered voters on petitions. Through a referendum, the legislature submits a proposal to the people for approval or disapproval.

These legal actions, though provided for by law, occur infrequently. A frequently used means for expressing an opinion is writing a letter to your elected representative. Members of the General Assembly and state officials pay close attention to their mail, particularly when a piece of controversial legislation is at hand.

Simple as it is, everything depends upon your use of the vote. It is the basic tool of democracy. If a few citizens don't use it, democracy falters; if no one uses it, there is no democracy.

Voter Registration

A potential voter must be 17 and one-half years old, a U.S. citizen, and have identification to register. Registration is open until the fourth Wednesday before an election. Contact your county clerk about where to register in your area. If your address changes after the deadline, contact your county clerk's office for further instructions.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Much of the power to regulate internal affairs in Missouri is delegated to locally elected governing bodies. These local units have no reserved powers of their own, but only those which are granted to them by the Missouri Constitution and laws. The state sets up both the basic framework of government available to the local units and also the conditions governing local choice and implementation. The people in the local units fill in the details with appropriate actions and ordinances, being allowed varying degrees of discretion depending on the size of their population and other factors.

STRUCTURE OF MISSOURI GOVERNMENT

Missouri's government is divided into three branches: the legislative, the executive, and the judicial. The legislature creates laws, the executive branch administers laws, and the judicial branch interprets laws. Having three branches of government ensures that no one group can dominate the government through a concentration of power. Distribution of powers among state officials is a safeguard so citizens are fairly represented.

Legislative Branch

The General Assembly meets in the Capitol once a year, beginning in January, for four and one-half months for a regular session and then again in September for a veto session. When the session adjourns for the year, legislators return to their districts where they continue to serve as the political voice of their constituents.

The only other time the legislature meets is if the governor or General Assembly calls for a special session. A special session deals only with specific legislation for which it was called and cannot exceed 60 days in duration.

SENATE

Missouri is divided into 34 districts on the basis of population. The senators are elected for four-year terms. To be eligible, a person must be at least 30 years old, a qualified voter in the state for three years, and a resident of the district for one year.

The President Pro Tem is elected by the members and heads the Senate. He or she is responsible for appointing all committee chairs and majority party committee members.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

The Missouri House of Representatives is composed of 163 districts. Members of the House are elected for two-year terms. To run, a person must be at least 24 years old, a qualified voter in the state for at least two years, and resident of the district for at least one year.

The Speaker is the presiding officer in the House. His or her responsibilities include appointing committee chairs, establishing the number of members on each committee, and appointing the majority party members of committees. He or she also assigns bills to committees and signs all official actions of the House.

The Making of the Law

The idea for a piece of legislation may come from a private citizen, business group, or a legislator. The bill may be drafted by the legislator or he or she may request the professional assistance of the legislative staff. A bill may originate in either chamber with the exception of appropriations bills which are always introduced in the House of Representatives.

Since the process is similar in both chambers, we will follow a bill introduced in the House. After the sponsoring legislator has filed the bill with the Chief Clerk of the House, it must be first read. Then, it is second read and referred to the Speaker of the House for assignment to a committee. The first and second reading of bills might be considered a formality since the legislature does not take action until the Speaker of the House has assigned the bills to committee.

Once the bill is assigned to committee, the process moves at a faster pace. A bill seldom comes out of committee exactly the way it was received. The committee has a public hearing; then it has an executive session. During this session, amendments can be offered, or the committee can completely rewrite the bill and offer a House Committee Substitute. After all the changes have been made, the committee votes on the bill. If a majority of those present vote to pass the bill out of committee, it is placed on the perfection calendar.

Once placed on the perfection calendar, the bill must wait its turn for debate. At this stage of the process, all House members get a chance to express their views on the bill. During debate, amendments may be offered and voted on, or the House may choose to return to the introduced bill.

Each time a change is offered, the House must vote on that change. After all debate has ended, the Speaker calls for a vote. If passed, the bill is referred to as perfected. A simple majority of those present in the chamber is all that is required for passage. It is then placed on the third reading calendar.

On the third reading calendar, the bill is again debated before the House, but not amended. After all debate has ended, the Speaker calls for a roll call vote. To pass a bill on third reading, a constitutional majority is required. At least 82 of the 163 members of the House of Representatives must vote in favor to pass a bill on third reading.

If passed by the House, the bill goes to the Senate where it goes through a similar process. If any changes are made in the Senate, the bill must go back to the House for its approval. If the House rejects any or all of the changes made by the Senate, the bill will go to a conference committee composed of members of both the House and the Senate. If the conference committee reaches a compromise, its report must be adopted by both the House and the Senate before the bill is Truly Agreed To And Finally Passed. It is then signed by the Speaker of the House and the President of the Senate and sent to the governor.

If the governor signs the bill or takes no action, it becomes law on August 28th. However, if it contains an emergency clause, the bill becomes effective earlier. If the governor vetoes the bill, it can only become law with a two-thirds majority in both the House and the Senate to override the veto.

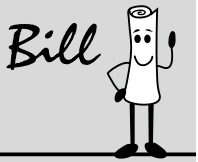
HOW A BILL BECOMES A LAW

COMPLIMENTS OF
YOUR STATE REPRESENTATIVE

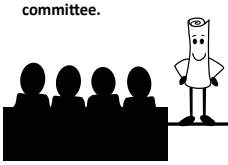
This depiction follows a bill introduced in the House of Representatives. The Senate follows a similar process.

BEGIN HERE

Introduced and first read.



Second reading and referral to a committee.



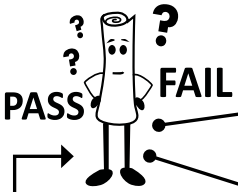
Committee holds hearings during which anyone may speak for or against the bill. After considering the bill, it may offer amendments or a committee substitute bill.

Bill is placed on the Perfection Calendar to be debated. Amendments may be offered.

If passed, the bill is Perfected.

The bill goes on the Third Reading calendar where, after debate, each Representative's vote is recorded.

The bill is sent to the Senate where it repeats the process, except the Perfection and Third Reading are combined into one step.



If the bill passes both House and Senate in identical forms, the bill is Truly Agreed to and Finally Passed.

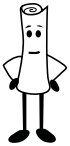
If the bill passes in a different form, and the House agrees to accept it, it is Truly Agreed to & Finally Passed.

If the House rejects the changes, the bill returns to the Senate for reconsideration.

If the Senate does not reconsider the amendments and does not approve the bill in its original form, the bill may be sent to a Conference Committee composed of members of both the House and Senate.

If the Conference Committee reaches an agreement, the report of the committee is sent to both houses for a vote.

If either rejects the report, the process may be repeated.



If both houses agree, the bill is Truly Agreed To & Finally Passed.

If the Governor signs the bill or takes no action, it becomes law.

If it becomes law, it is sent to the Secretary of State to be incorporated into the Missouri Statutes.

If the Governor vetoes the bill, it can only become law with two-thirds of both the House and Senate voting to override the veto.

Executive Branch

The executive branch consists of the governor, all other elected officials, and sixteen departments. An important aspect of the executive branch is that all six statewide officers are elected individually and independently of one another, which means that the governor has no basic control over the other five executive officials.

According to state law, the governor must be at least 30 years of age, a U.S. citizen for the past fifteen years, and a Missouri resident for the past ten years. He or she has the veto power which, unless the legislature overrides it by a two-thirds majority vote, can prevent a bill from becoming a law. The governor has the ability to pardon people who have committed crimes and has the constitutional power of commander-in-chief of the state militia. No person may be elected to this office more than twice.

Judicial Branch

The third major branch of Missouri government is the judicial. This branch is divided into three levels, from lowest to highest: the circuit and associate circuit courts, the court of appeals, and the Supreme Court. The judicial branch deals in two areas of law: criminal, which cover cases that causes injury to the state or society; and civil, which cover cases of disagreement between persons over the interpretation of the law.

STATE INFORMATION SYSTEMS

State Website and Accountability Portal

The State of Missouri Website *www.mo.gov* offers more than 650 online services. Citizens can find everything from State Agency News, State News and Events, Missouri facts and figures, State Job Openings, and Road Conditions to services such as filing personal taxes, paying traffic tickets, registering to vote, and renewing license plates.

The Missouri Accountability Portal (MAP) on this site provides a comprehensive view for Missourians as to how their tax dollars are being spent. This site details state financial matters such as agency expenditures, state employee salaries, and budget restrictions. The data is updated each business day.

Information Systems

An informed citizen is an empowered citizen. Ready access to information regarding state government, legislators, current and past legislation, legislative calendars, and current state issues provides the tools necessary to formulate opinions, take action, and assume an active role as a participant in determining the direction state government.

The State of Missouri offers a variety of information technology resources to help citizens stay informed.

House

(www.house.mo.gov/news.aspx)

On this site citizens can Find their Representative or other house members, access Bill Summaries, Bill Tracking, Bill Activity Reports, Floor Activity (House Calendar, Floor Schedule, Current and Past House actions), a video Week-in-Review, House Press Releases, and Dates of Interest. The public also can listen to live House and Senate debate.

Senate

The Senate Communications office provides similar services and may be accessed by going to *www.senate.mo.gov*. Links also are provided for Missouri Statutes, the Missouri Constitution, Facts about the Missouri Senate and the Missouri Senate Kids' Page.

Legislative Library

Copies of current and past House and Senate bills as well as Bill Status Information are available to the public at the Legislative Library *www.mogo.mo.gov* located in Room 117 A in the State Capitol Building.

Hours are 8:30-4:30 Monday – Friday.

Fiscal Notes

The state, just like business and families, must operate within a budget. Similarly, when considering items to be kept or added to the budget, it always is necessary to take a look at the price tag. That's why all legislation presented for consideration by the Missouri Assembly, with the exception of appropriation bills, is required by statute to have a fiscal note detailing what, if any, monetary impact the legislation would have on the state. Although several versions of a bill may be presented during a legislative session, each bill submitted must have a separate fiscal note. If an amendment is adopted that changes a bill's impact, the fiscal note must be revised.

It is the job of the Oversight Division, an impartial, nonpolitical office in the legislative branch of state government, to gather information from each element of state government that would be affected by a bill and then prepare the fiscal note. To help insure there is no political preference, input in preparation of a fiscal note from outside sources such as legislators or lobbyists is not allowed unless information is requested by the fiscal analyst preparing the note.

A fiscal note typically may contain information such as operating costs, anticipated salaries, capital costs over a specified period, and anticipated inflation.

Archives

Most people have a special place where they store important family documents. It may be a post office box or a special file at home containing records of marriages, births and deaths, newspaper clippings, and special events. These files are valuable resources for our families to learn about the past, preserve the present, and pass on to future generations.

The Missouri State Archives is very similar in regard to the state. It was created by the Missouri legislature in 1965 and is a division of the office of Secretary of State. It is the storehouse for both current and historical Missouri records dating as far back as 1770. The treasure of information and records stored there helps define who we are as Missourians, where we came from, and what we have overcome and accomplished.

The Archives currently house more than 336 million pages of paper, 400,000 photographs, 9,000 maps; 61,000 reels of microfilm, 560 cubic feet of published state documents, and 1,000 audio recordings. Its records are available to state government officials and to the general public.

State records that are archived include Census, County and Municipal, judicial, land, and military. Birth and death records recorded before 1909 are available. These records can be searched online at archref@sos.mo.gov. Information also can be obtained by e-mail or written request. Microfilm and published materials are available in the research room.

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

Missouri has ten people in Washington, D.C., who represent the state in the United States Congress. The United States Congress is the legislative branch of the federal government, and it works in conjunction with the country's executive and judicial branches to exercise the sovereign power of the people of the United States.

United States Senators

All states are represented in Washington by two senators who are elected to six-year terms. These officials provide a smaller body of more experienced lawmakers to counterbalance the workings of the shorter term House members.

United States House

There are currently eight Missourians in the House of Representatives in Washington. The members of the House are elected to two-year terms from districts in the state which are drawn according to population; thus, the more heavily populated states have more representatives and a state's representatives will increase or decrease in proportion to the state's population.

2016 CITIZEN'S GUIDE TO GOVERNMENT

Missouri House of Representatives

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