



Missouri House of Representatives

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Rep. Tricia Byrnes Applauds Passage of Critical Radioactive Waste Investigation Legislation

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. – State Representative Tricia Byrnes this week celebrated the final passage of legislation aimed at enhancing the state’s ability to investigate radioactive contamination in the St. Charles and St. Louis region—a historic and deeply personal achievement for the lawmaker, who chairs the House Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs.

The legislative package—House Bills 516, 290, and 778—passed unanimously in both chambers of the Missouri General Assembly and now heads to the Governor’s desk.

“This is a victory for the families who have lived in the shadow of radioactive waste for generations,” Rep. Byrnes, R-Wentzville, said. “For too long, our communities have carried the burden of federal negligence. With these bills, Missouri finally has stronger tools to hold agencies accountable and uncover the truth.”

The legislation grants the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) the authority to obtain search warrants to investigate potential contamination on government land that would otherwise be inaccessible. It also removes a longstanding \$150,000 annual cap on state spending for such investigations and ensures that unspent funds remain available for future use—rather than being swept into unrelated accounts.

Importantly, the legislation makes clear that Missouri’s investigation funds may not be used for cleanup, reinforcing that the responsibility for remediation lies with the federal government and its contractors, who mishandled radioactive materials during and after the development of the atomic bomb.

Decades of federal mismanagement left a toxic legacy in the area—where uranium was once refined for the Manhattan Project. Waste from that effort was transported, dumped, and left unsecured, leading to the contamination of Coldwater Creek, nearby neighborhoods, and eventually the West Lake Landfill. Despite decades of cleanup efforts, new evidence continues to emerge about the spread and

severity of the contamination. Earlier this year, the Environmental Protection Agency expanded the cleanup footprint at the West Lake Landfill by 40 acres, increasing the projected cost of remediation to nearly \$400 million.

“We can’t change the past, but we can demand transparency, accountability, and justice for those affected,” Rep. Byrnes said. “This legislation ensures that Missouri is no longer a passive bystander. We are asserting our right to investigate threats to public health and protect future generations.”

Rep. Byrnes, who has long advocated for increased oversight and action on radioactive waste issues, credited the bipartisan support in both chambers and the tireless work of affected families and advocacy groups for pushing the issue to the forefront.

“Our work is far from over,” she added. “But today, we took a meaningful step forward—for the victims, for the survivors, and for every child growing up near these affected areas.”

State Representative Tricia Byrnes, a Republican, represents part of St. Charles County (District 63) in the Missouri House of Representatives. She was elected to her first two-year term in November 2022. For more information, please contact Rep. Byrnes at 573-751-1460 or by email at Tricia.Byrnes@house.mo.gov.

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