



2010

masw

legislative update



February 12, 2010

Senators Break "No New Taxes Pledge"

Four members of the Senate Committee on [Governmental Accountability and Fiscal Oversight](#) yesterday (2/11) violated the "no new taxes" pledge they made to their constituents and voted to create

- a NEW TAX on prescription drugs
- a NEW TAX on doctor visits
- a NEW TAX on child day care fees
- a NEW TAX on tuition at Catholic schools and other private schools
- a NEW TAX on nursing home fees
- a NEW TAX on payments to a babysitter
- NEW TAXES on virtually every good and service not currently taxed
- HIGHER TAXES on all items currently subject to sales tax

These four Senators – [Brad Lager](#), [Jim Lembke](#), [Chuck Purgason](#), and [Kurt Schaeffer](#) – broke their “no new taxes, no higher taxes” pledge by voting [SCS SJR 29](#) "Do Pass." This measure would amend the state constitution, creating the NEW TAXES and HIGHER TAXES list above.

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Bills to Lift Lifetime Food Stamp Ban Heard

[SB 612](#) and [SB 613](#), the Food Stamp Ban Repeal Bills, had a successful committee hearing Wednesday afternoon (2/10). MASW went before the [Senate Progress and Development Committee](#) to testify in favor of these bills, which would modify the optional Federal Ban on ex-drug offenders from qualifying for the Food Stamp Program.

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English-Only Drivers' Test – [on page X...](#)

MASW Opposes SJR 29.

As the voice for social justice in Missouri, we are, on this issue, guided by the following policy priority...

Shared Prosperity. *All people in Missouri should share in the prosperity of our society and pay their fair share of the cost of maintaining and enhancing the physical and human infrastructure that makes prosperity possible. Public policy should enable people, including those living in poverty, to acquire a quality education, to accumulate assets, and to earn their way to greater prosperity.*

MASW Supports SB 612-13.

Our relevant policy priority...

Quality Healthcare. *All people in Missouri should have access to affordable, quality health care, including mental health services, through fully funded state implementation of national healthcare reform. Programs affecting the health of Missourians, such as Medicaid, CHIP, Food Stamps and other nutrition services, should be expanded to the fullest extent possible.*

Senators Break “No New Taxes” Pledge (continued from page 1)

These new sales taxes are needed to offset the other major provisions of the proposal: to relieve corporations which profit from doing business in our state of any obligation to pay for the state services and infrastructure which make doing business here possible.

That’s right: under this measure, corporations would pay no taxes to the state of Missouri. None.

It would also repeal the individual state income tax. For all its faults, many of which MASW has specific proposals to address, the state income tax system calls upon higher income Missourians to pay a higher share of the cost of state services, **whereas SJR 29 will lower the state tax burden for high income Missourians, shifting the tax burden to low- and middle-income people.**

Senators [Rita Days](#) and [Wes Shoemyer](#) had the good sense to vote against this radical tax plan that none of the other 50 states has ever attempted.

MASW will continue to provide specific objections based on various aspects of this legislation and how it will affect real people and create a less just society.

Our partners at the Missouri Budget Project (MBP) have completed a [detailed analysis](#) of the proposal. The short version is that SJR 29 repeals NINE BILLION DOLLARS in current state taxes, and creates the need to spend an additional \$4.4 billion through its convoluted “prebate” provisions (which we’ll discuss in a future *Update*), so this new tax must produce \$13,400,000,000 in revenue. Missouri consumers averaged \$120 billion in spending (on goods and service this plan would tax) in the three years before the current Recession. So the sales tax will need to be 11.2%.

Food Stamp Bill (cont. from page 1)

It was a successful committee meeting. There is more broad based support for these bills this year than in any other year! The Missouri Grocers Association, the US Probation and Parole Office of Cape Girardeau, The Chief of Police of St. Louis, The Mayor of Cape Girardeau, The Kansas City Crime Commission, and others either testified or wrote a letter of support. In total, there were approximately 10 people that testified in favor of the bill, and none that testified against.



Sen. Yvonne Wilson
Sponsor of SB 612

MASW testified and told the Committee that it believes that [these bills would be a benefit to the State](#). First, it would bring millions of Federal Food Stamp dollars into our economy. It would help not only the families that would receive the benefit, but also

the grocery stores and farmers that would benefit from the Food Stamp dollars.

Second, it would help with public safety. Studies show that the more support given to individuals leaving the criminal justice system, the less likely they will re-commit a crime and end up back in the justice system.

The committee will vote on the bill next week and if it passes it will be up to Senate President *Pro Tem* [Charlie Shields](#) to put it on the full Senate calendar. MASW encourages each of you to contact Sen. Shields’ office and encourage him to put SB 612 & 613 on the calendar.

[Submitted by Christine Woody, MASW Hunger Coordinator]

[Join MASW – or renew your membership.](#)

Missouri's Welcome for Refugees & Foreign-Born Business Entrepreneurs: No Drivers' License for You!

Without any hint that they saw the irony, legislators wearing lapel pins of the official seal of the state -- pins that bear the definitely-not-in-English state motto "salus populi suprema lex esto" -- conducted a committee hearing this week (2/10) for [HB 1231](#), a bill to prohibit interpreters from assisting legal residents of the state in taking their drivers' license exam, and requiring the test be given in English only.

As Missouri Immigrant & Refugee Advocates (MIRA) stated in their testimony against the bill, "common experience demonstrates that one can understand traffic signs and safety warnings, even small phrases in English without being able to read and/or write English sufficiently to take a written exam in English. Conversely, a native Missouri driver traveling abroad may drive safely in a foreign country whose primary language is not English because traffic signs and safety warnings are simple to understand even in other languages."

MIRA further stated, "many other states with much more ethnically diverse populations than the State of Missouri and higher proportions of lawfully present, newly arrived immigrants have considered the question of English only driver's license tests and have rejected the concept. As the State of Missouri does currently, these states have generally implemented testing procedures that allow the applicant to take a written test in their native language or in English with the help of a translator.

"In order to assure that these applicants are able to "understand highway traffic signs and safety warnings" they implement a part of the test where the applicant views a sign, warning or short traffic related phrase and then must explain its meaning in their native language with the use of a translator. These states have concluded that "**fluency in the English language sufficient to take and**

pass a written exam in English is not indicative of the applicant's ability to drive safely on the public roadways". There really does not exist any good research or data suggesting otherwise. (Robert Hagge, Research Analysis, California Department of Motor Vehicles, Research and Development Branch)."

MASW is a founding member of MIRA, and we also submitted our own testimony against the bill. We noted that "the law already prohibits issuing a driver's license to people who lack documented proof of lawful presence, so HB 1231 would only impose its requirements on people who are here legally, such as refugees."

And we could not resist a jab at the unfettered xenophobia in our State Capitol, so we also said, "Perhaps a state with a name which is a French attempt to pronounce a Sioux word that probably has to do with canoes (a term used among Europeans first by Columbus, an attempt to render in Spanish the Arawakan {original language in Haiti} word "canaoua"), with cities named for non-English speaking places like Paris, Mexico, Westphalia, Ste. Genevieve, Madrid, Milan, and Versailles (to name just a very few), and with the official state motto "salus populi suprema lex esto" should stop pretending that we are all still subjects of Her Royal Majesty and must speak her official language to the exclusion of all others."

MASW's relevant policy priority on this issue...

Fair Treatment. *All people in Missouri should be treated with dignity and fairness. It is a fundamental element of the common good to extend a helping hand to those who are too often made to feel unwelcome – those subjected to discrimination, those re-entering society from the corrections system, and those who were born in other nations. The state should protect all people from exploitation and injustice, and teach children in our schools how to value others and resolve differences through non-violent means.*