



2010 masw

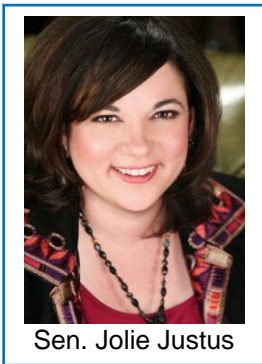
legislative update



February 26, 2010

Missouri Immigrant & Refugee Advocates (MIRA) Day at Capitol

Hearing on State Version of DREAM Act



Sen. Jolie Justus

The [Senate Education Committee](#) heard [SB 783](#) this week (2/24). This is the state version of the DREAM Act; it would provide access to higher education for immigrant students in Missouri.

The sponsor, [Sen. Jolie Justus](#), presented the bill. It would require higher education institutions that receive state funding to provide in-state tuition to any individual who: (1) resided with their parent(s) while attending high school; (2) graduated from a public or private Missouri high school (or GED); (3) attended high school in Missouri for at least 2 years; (4) entered the United States prior to the enactment of this act, and; (5) is or has filed to become a permanent resident of the United States.

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As the voice for social justice in Missouri, MASW supports SB 783, the state version of the DREAM Act, based on our Policy Priority:

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...

Radical Tax Plan Shelved (For Now)

[SJR 29](#), the radical plan to repeal Missouri’s personal and corporate income tax, replacing the billions of dollars in state revenue with the largest sales tax every attempted, was placed on the Informal Calendar this week (2/24).

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MASW opposes SJR 29 based on our 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...

Bill Gutting Human Rights Commission Advances

[SB 852](#), which would limit the ability of the [Missouri Commission on Human Rights](#) to investigate complaints of workplace and housing discrimination, and to enforce related laws, was voted “Do Pass” by the Senate [Committee on General Laws](#) this week (2/25).

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MASW opposes SB 852 based on our Fair Treatment cited at the top of the above text box.

DREAM Act & MIRA

(continued from page 1)

Sen. Justus noted that some of the benefits of enacting SB 783 include stronger education and economic policy, a more positive educational climate for Missouri, a step towards fixing our broken immigration system and a chance for immigrant students to pursue equal education on their path to U.S. citizenship.

Organizations attending the hearing to testify in favor of this bill included Missouri Immigrant and Refugee Advocates ([MIRA](#)), Missouri National Education Association ([MNEA](#)), Service Employees International Union ([SEIU](#)), and Missouri Association for Social Welfare ([MASW](#)). There were no groups appearing against the bill.



The hearing followed a very successful MIRA Advocacy, which was Tuesday (2/23). MASW, one of the first statewide organizations to join MIRA when it was founded in 2006, was well represented at MIRA's day at the State Capitol.

Don Love, Chair of MASW's [Human Rights Task Force](#), Stephanie Pate, who is completing her MSW as a practicum student at MASW, and Executive Director Bob Quinn were on hand for the event.

Radical Tax Plan on (Thin) Ice

(continued from page 1)

The measure was fairly high on the [Senate Calendar](#), virtually ensuring it would be debated this week.

Yet when the Senate reached SJR 29 on Wednesday (2/24), the sponsor asked that it be placed on the Informal Calendar.

Sometimes, the Informal Calendar is where bills go to die. Too hot to handle, too cold to hold, or just too much trouble, the bills die without any Senator ever having to cast a recorded vote on it.

However, it is also a holding pen, where bills about which strong differences of opinion exist can incubate, while those who might care to work out their differences -- sometimes legislators, more often lobbyists for special interest groups -- come up with a compromise which can be brought back before the full Senate with a reasonable chance of passage.

Which fate awaits SJR 29 remains to be seen. MASW sent two memos to the Senate examining some of the reasons we to oppose the measure (see below), and we will continue to express our opposition.

Even if nothing further happens on this proposal in the legislature this year, this is one of those ideas that is just too stupid to go away. We will need to continue to make the case for sensible, economically and socially just tax reform.

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Bill Gutting Human Rights Commission [\(continued from page 1\)](#)

The measure is now #12 on the Senate Perfection Calendar, the main calendar this time of year.

It is likely, though by no means certain, that Senators would take up the bill for debate before they leave for their week-long Spring Break – they are not in session the week of Monday, March 8.

[Please contact your Senator](#) to urge a NO vote on SB 852. You can use the following facts in your contact.

SB 852 would amend the Missouri Human Rights Act, reducing the coverage of the law and making it more difficult to prove discrimination. It could also result in a loss of \$978,862 dollars in federal funds.

If the Missouri Human Rights Act is amended and found not to be substantially equivalent to the federal anti-discrimination laws, then MCHR could lose its federal funding from EEOC and HUD contracts. These federal funds pay for 60% of MCHR personnel and 87% of its equipment and expenses.

The bill would require a higher standard of proof than federal anti-discrimination laws; eliminate punitive damages as a remedy for discrimination by a state government entity, including school districts and political subdivisions; allow private clubs to discriminate in employment, and; limit the damages victims of discrimination can receive in employment and public accommodations cases.

Memos to the Senate on SJR 29

NEW TAX ON HEALTH CARE

Monday, February 22, 2010

TO: Honorable Members of the Missouri Senate

FROM: Bob Quinn, Executive Director
Missouri Association for Social Welfare (MASW)

There are many reasons to oppose SCS SJR 29, which is #11 on the Senate Perfection Calendar.

The NEW TAX on health care is the reason on which we will focus today.

First, it is a new tax. Today, Missouri families and individuals do not pay a sales tax on the fees they pay when they see a doctor, dentist, or other health care provider. They do not pay a sales tax on prescription medications. They do not pay a sales tax on medical tests, or on surgery or other medical procedures. They do not pay a sales tax on health insurance premiums.

If SCS SJR 29 is enacted, Missouri families and individuals will pay a sales tax when they go to the doctor – they don't pay it now, they will pay it if the proposal is enacted; that makes it a NEW TAX.

Missourians will pay a NEW TAX on prescription medications, on medical tests and procedures, on health insurance premiums – on every health and medical related product and service which is not taxed today.

As a former member of the Missouri General Assembly myself, I would hope that no elected lawmaker would pretend that a tax on doctor visits and prescriptions is not a new tax. We don't pay a tax on these things today; after SJR 29, we will. How could your constituents possibly see that as anything other than a NEW TAX?

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Memos to Senate (Continued from page 4)

Second, as you know, catastrophic health situations are a leading cause of personal bankruptcies in this state and nation. SCS SJR 29 exacerbates this problem by imposing a sales tax on all the medical procedures (radiation, chemotherapy, surgery), prescription medications, visits to specialists, therapists, and on and on.

For all the faults of our state income tax system – and MASW has testified to many imperfections of the state income tax as currently structured, and we've made several specific proposals to fix it – it does provide a break to families and individuals with astronomical medical expenses.

So today, if a Missouri family is struck with a medical catastrophe, the state income tax they owe will be reduced (by our state tax code's link to the federal tax code, which provides a tax reduction when medical expenses are extraordinary and exceed a certain percentage of taxable income).

But under SCS SJR 29, that same family would actually see the tax it owes the state of Missouri increase!

Seriously, you would vote for that?

Please consider opposing SCS SJR 29, which would impose a NEW TAX on health care, and increase the bills of Missourians struggling with high health care costs.

FANTASY REFORM (MEMO #2)

Wednesday, February 24, 2010

There are many reasons to oppose SCS SJR 29, which is #2 on the Senate Perfection Calendar.

It is a fantasy reform; that is the reason on which we will focus today.

The first fantasy is that, in a proposal that proponents say with a straight face is "revenue neutral," everybody will pay less taxes. Not to put too fine a point on it, but you simply can't raise the same amount of money if everybody pays less.

SCS SJR 29 relieves corporations of any obligation to pay for the state services and legal and physical infrastructure which protects them and makes it possible for them to make profits from the people in our state. That's a billion dollars, give or take, that corporations pay in state taxes today that they won't pay under SCS SJR 29.

The means the people of the state – your constituents – have to pay at least a billion dollars more in taxes under SCS SJR 29 than they do today.

Now some proponents have argued that we'll make up the difference because everything we buy will be cheaper; after all, the corporations which no longer have to pay state income tax will pass that savings along to us.

Sure they will. Note all the love directed at Washington for giving our tax money to Wall Street through the bailouts, and recall how those corporations have passed their good fortune along to your constituents.

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FANTASY REFORM (Continued from page 4)

And if your constituents liked the Wall Street bailouts, they'll love you giving away a billion dollar tax break to corporations, in order that they (your constituents) can pay another billion dollars in state taxes.

Seriously, how much savings could a Missouri business pass along in any event? A product is manufactured in China, shipped on an ocean-going cargo ship across the Pacific, unloaded on docks at San Francisco or Los Angeles, shipped by rail or truck across several states, put in a warehouse in Arkansas or wherever, and finally put on shelf at a store near you. That item is really going to be cheaper under SCS SJR 29? If the change in the Missouri tax code saves the corporations involved anything at all, wouldn't their first mission be a higher profit?

The second fantasy is that SCS SJR 29 will create a tax system free of the maddening defects of the current state income tax.

The so-called "prebate," an attempt to cushion the natural regressivity of the sales tax, creates a new cost to the state of some 3.5 to 4 billion dollars. So your constituents have to pay an additional several billion dollars in sales tax, part of which we'll all get back through the "prebate" (to offset the cost of necessities).

So we'll have to pay a tax and then we get part of it back? Isn't that one of the aspects of the income tax – withholding and refund – that your constituents find so maddening?

Another complaint about the income tax is all the record keeping that is required. And yet, under SCS SJR 29, all kinds of new record keeping requirements are created. Your constituents will have to keep records and collect sales tax if they provide services like lawn care, baby sitting, and other services not taxed today.

You no doubt hear considerable disgust with all the loopholes in our state income tax system. Yet SCS SJR 29 creates the biggest loophole ever, by exempting all business purchases of goods and services from sales tax.

This creates some incredible inequities. Here is just one example. If a corporation is suing one of your constituents, the corporation pays no sales tax on the fee it pays to the attorneys it retains for that purpose, but your constituent will pay a NEW TAX, a sales tax, on the fee he or she pays to their attorney to defend against the suit.

Please consider opposing SCS SJR 29, which is a fantasy reform. It defies logic to pretend that it can be revenue neutral and yet everybody pays less in taxes. The new tax system created will be just as frustrating and full of loopholes as the current one.