



MASW

Legislative Update 2009



April 24, 2009

MASW Priority: Economic Justice CWIP Dead?

The bill to force low- and moderate-income families to do what federally bailed-out Wall Street financiers chose not to do – provide the financing of a new multi-billion dollar power plant – is dead, [at least for now](#).

[AmerenUE](#), the most visible of the special interests pushing this legislation ([SB 228](#), [HB 554](#)), stated in their press conference yesterday (4/23) that it was obvious the legislature would not pass the changes the law the utilities are seeking, and they asked the sponsors of the bills to cease their efforts.

Some proponents of the CWIP bill have complained that key legislators and groups representing ratepayers were unwilling to compromise, and that is why the bill died. If so, good for us.

From MASW's perspective, virtually no one supporting the bill to charge ratepayers for Construction Work In Progress (CWIP) was willing to seriously discuss with us and our allies how to structure the financing of new electric power plants in ways that would not unjustly burden those least able to pay. Yet we are always ready to have those discussions.

109th Annual Conference Margaret Donnelly to Keynote



Director Donnelly

[Margaret Donnelly](#), Director of the [Department of Health and Senior Services](#), will be the Keynote Speaker at MASW's 109th Annual Conference on Friday, Nov. 6 at the University of Missouri – St. Louis. Donnelly is a former legislator, family practice attorney and social

worker. She will speak during the luncheon.

Good News Week!

HOUSING TRUST FUND INCREASE
Page 2...

FOOD STAMP SUPPLEMENT ADVANCES
Page 2...

DEATH PENALTY STUDY "DO PASS"
Page 3...

Bad News Too

STIMULUS MONEY FOR KIDS' HEALTH OR POLITICAL POPULARITY? (GUESS)
Page 3...

Salus Populi Suprema Lex Esto

MASW Priority: Decent Housing

Trust Fund Amendment Adopted in Senate

[Sen. Jolie Justus](#) has been attempting to increase revenue for the [Missouri Housing Trust Fund](#) as long as she has been in the Senate, and this week (4/22) she succeeded in winning a voice vote on the Senate floor to do just that.



The Senate was debating a bill passed earlier this year by the House, [HB 376](#). It is a local government bill; most powers that counties, cities, and other local political subdivisions have is due to legislation enacted by the state, and HB 376 is the omnibus bill this year for every local government that wants something changed (and legislator who wants to change something regarding his or her local government).

The Missouri Housing Trust Fund derives all of its revenue from a fee collected by a local official in each county called the County Recorder (or Recorder of Deeds). The fee, established 15 years ago when MASW and our allies finally achieved establishment of MHTF, is \$3 paid when filing real estate transaction paperwork – for most of us, it is among the many fees we pay as part of the closing costs when buying a house.

The Senate version of HB 376 is a Senate Substitute for the Senate Committee Substitute, e.g. SS SCS HB 376. Several amendments were offered and adopted during debate on the Senate floor. When Sen. Justus offered her proposal, it was Senate Amendment 8. The relevant language states, “*Two dollars of the additional fee collected under this subsection shall be credited to the Missouri housing trust fund.*”

We are quite some distance from actually having more money in the MHTF. SS SCS HB 376, as amended, cannot be passed by the Senate until the [Committee on Governmental Accountability and Fiscal Oversight](#) (GAFO) holds a hearing on its fiscal impact, which was increased substantially by the Senate substitutions and amendments. Even if it clears GAFO, it must still get 18 votes on a Senate roll call. And even if it survives these hurdles, it must return to the House, where it is unlikely all the Senate changes will be accepted without first going to a conference committee to discuss the many new provisions not in the bill when it left the House.

Still, this is the most progress we have made on this issue in several years!

MASW Priority: Quality Healthcare/Nutrition

House Passes Food Stamp Supplement

Down to the wire for passing bills before this year’s May 15 adjournment, [Rep. Bob Nance](#) succeeded in passing [HB 156](#) which would use state money to supplement the [federal Food Stamp program](#) for seniors, so that the minimum monthly benefit would in effect be \$30, rather than the \$14 set in federal law. With three weeks left in this year’s regular session, House bills that have not yet made it to the Senate are virtually dead, so this priority of MASW’s [Hunger Task Force](#) “crossed over” just in time!



Salus Populi Suprema Lex Esto

MASW Priority: Fair Treatment

Death Penalty Study Voted “Do Pass” in House Committee

Taking a cue from their colleagues in the Senate, members of the House [Committee on Public Safety](#) unanimously voted a committee substitute version of the death penalty moratorium bill “Do Pass” without the moratorium. [HCS HB 484](#) still contains the provision that a blue ribbon panel will be appointed to study all aspects of the death penalty in Missouri, but now lacks the two-year moratorium on executions.



Rep. Deeken

Earlier this month the Senate debated [SCS SB 321](#), which was virtually the same as the House bill is now (following committee action to remove the moratorium provision). That bill will not come up again this year, but it advanced further than any similar bill in recent years.

With time running out in the session, it is too late for HB 484 to become law, and it is unlikely it will get debated on the House floor. While it constitutes a victory to have the blue ribbon panel concept voted out of committee in both legislative chambers – and unanimously in both cases – we would have liked to get a “Do Pass” vote on the moratorium itself. We were close to having a majority in the House committee, but when the substitute version was offered we never had the opportunity to get a vote on the bill as originally filed by [Rep. Bill Deeken](#).

MASW Priority: Safety Net

House Says No to SCHIP Again Plans to Squander Stimulus Money Instead

Members of the Missouri House who believe that [using public money in ways that benefit the public is the purpose of government](#) tried again this week to spend \$23 million of state money to draw \$84 million in federal money to extend healthcare for children under SCHIP.

Now that each chamber has passed its own version of the [Fiscal Year 2010 State Budget](#), a conference committee of five Senators and five Representatives will meet to fashion a compromise version. Under the [rules of legislative procedure](#), the conferees can agree to the House position (say \$1 million for program “A”), the Senate position (say \$2 million for program “A”), or something in between (say \$1.5 million for program “A”).

What they cannot agree to is something outside the difference (say \$8 million for program “A”).

However, if both chambers vote to approve a motion allowing the conferees to “exceed the difference” then it would be possible to do \$8 million for program “A” in our example.

[House Minority Leader Paul LeVota](#) made such a motion regarding SCHIP when the House was debating the procedural motions needed to start the conference committee on the budget. ***Continued on page 4...***



Rep. LeVota

Salus Populi Suprema Lex Esto

He reasoned that since the Senate used hundreds of millions of federal stimulus dollars above what the House did in crafting the budget, there would be money to use for the state share of SCHIP that was not before them when the House debated the budget earlier in the session.

73 Representatives voted in favor of Rep. LeVota's motion, and 85 voted against. This vote virtually guarantees that SCHIP expansion will not take place in Missouri, despite the availability of tens of millions in additional federal dollars for that very purpose...

Unless [Gov. Jay Nixon](#) calls the legislature into special session to deal specifically with the SCHIP issue. There are rumors something like that might happen, but even under that scenario there would have to be a significant change in philosophy by those legislators who control the appropriations process.

Instead, the majority in the House has now proposed [tossing one billion dollars](#) in federal stimulus money into the wind. There is some political popularity to be gained in handing out tens of dollars to each of us. But there is real good that could be done by spending that money as intended, on projects and programs that invest in the common good, in the welfare of the people.

According to State Budget Director Linda Luebbering (who spoke at MASW's St. Louis Chapter's monthly public forum in March about the state's fiscal situation), "I haven't heard of any other states even considering this." A quick check with the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) confirms this.

The best thing about our form of government is that we pretty much get the government we deserve. The worst thing about our form of government is that we pretty much get the government we deserve.

[**JOIN MASW**](#)

[**CONTRIBUTE TO MASW**](#)

[**BILLS OF INTEREST**](#)