



# MASW

## Legislative Update 2009



May 8, 2009

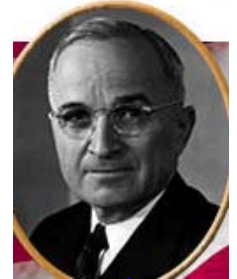
*"The health of American children, like their education, should be recognized as a definite public responsibility." – Harry Truman*

### MASW Priority: Quality Healthcare Missouri Lawmakers Deaf to Truman's Call

Nearly 64 years ago, with World War II just ended, President Harry Truman addressed a joint session of the United States Congress and called for a new national health care program.

According to the [Truman Presidential Library](#), "One of the chief aims of President Truman's plan was to insure that all communities, regardless of their size or income level, had access to doctors and hospitals... The most controversial aspect of the plan was the proposed national health insurance plan... Truman called for the creation of a national health insurance fund, to be run by the federal government. This fund would be open to all Americans, but would remain optional."

State lawmakers in Truman's home state have again refused to take even modest steps toward this great centerpiece of the late President's vision of a more just society.



[Happy 125<sup>th</sup> Birthday, Mr. President](#)

#### HELP PUSH HOUSING TRUST FUND INCREASE

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#### FOOD STAMP SUPPLEMENT BILL

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#### FORECLOSURE BILL ENACTED

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#### OPPOSITION TO "FAIR TAX" GROWS

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Faced with today's deadline to enact the [2010 state budget](#), the majority in the House refused to adopt the [plan proposed by Governor Jay Nixon](#), endorsed by groups the House majority normally sides with, such as [Associated Industries of Missouri](#), and passed by a bi-partisan vote in the State Senate.

The plan would partially restore some of the benefits taken away in the misguided Medicaid cuts of 2005 to as many as 35,000 working albeit low-income adults, at no additional cost to Missouri taxpayers. About \$50 million would be paid by hospitals from funds they would spend on care for people who cannot pay in any event, and another \$90 million in federal funds would pay for this partial restoration.

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***Salus Populi Suprema Lex Esto***

Opponents who state that the federal money is Missouri taxpayers' money have a point, but not one that leads to voting against the plan. Missouri taxpayers have sent this money to Washington, and the Missouri legislature can bring it back to our state through this plan, or allow it to be sent to California or Texas for use in their Medicaid programs.

Opponents also decried the plan as an "expansion of welfare," but Medicaid funding does not end up in the pockets of "welfare recipients" – the money is paid to healthcare providers (doctors, clinics, hospitals, pharmacies, etc.) in our state, which in addition to ensuring a healthier citizenry and better quality of life for thousands of people, provides the collateral benefit of pumping money into our economy.

After defeating the Nixon Plan for the umpteenth time, the House majority resorted to a legislative shell game in order to get the 2010 state budget voted by the constitutional deadline. In what proved to be the final version of the social services budget, they included appropriation of the hospital fees and federal match per the Nixon Plan, except that it is contingent on enactment of a separate law that has not yet been enacted – and may never be.

The appropriation is tied to enactment of [SB 306](#), which has passed the Senate; a House version awaits action, and even if the bill were not controversial and problematic, the chances that time will run out on the session before a compromise could be worked out and passed in both chambers are great. Session ends Friday, May 15 at 6:00 p.m. If SB 306 is not passed by then, the appropriation for the Nixon Plan to partially restore the Medicaid cuts is null and void.

As we have written in past Legislative Updates, SB 306 arises upon a false premise. It assumes that people working in low-income jobs do not have health insurance because there is no mechanism for them to buy it. In fact, people working in low-income jobs do not have health insurance because they do not have money to buy it.

And yet SB 306 says to those working in low-wage jobs, we have tens of millions of dollars to help buy health coverage for you, but we will not do so unless you pay your own money first. Again, these are people who do not have money, so *the state is denying help based on the fact that people need help*. Yes, it is that simple, and that tragic.

It is a long-shot strategy but, at this point, what else is there? [Contact your legislator](#) and encourage them to amend SB 306 so that it merely enacts Gov. Nixon's original proposal. It is very unlikely such a version of SB 306 would be crafted or enacted, but it is the only way to salvage the partial Medicaid restoration this session.

## **MASW Priority: Decent Housing** **Renters' Rights in Foreclosures Bill Passed**

[SCS HCS HB 836 & 753](#), sponsored by [Rep. Kiki Curls](#), has been Truly Agree and Finally Passed; it is on its way to the Governor's desk. If signed, the new law would improve and clarify the rights of renters when the residential unit where they are tenants is foreclosed upon. "It's not where we wanted it to be, but at least we've turned the corner on providing basic consideration for the tenants," Rep. Curls told supporters upon passage of her bill.

## MASW Priority: Decent Housing

### Contact Conferees to Keep Trust Fund Increase

The best chance to gain an increase in revenue for the [Missouri Housing Trust Fund](#) in years is before us. With one week left in the session, a \$2 increase in the fee that provides money for the fund is included as one of the amendments to [SS SCS HCS HB 376](#). Because the Senate version of the bill is very different than what was passed in the House, the two chambers have appointed a conference committee to work out the differences.

If the ten conferees can reach agreement, their new version of the bill will go back to the House and Senate for final passage. It is vital that the conference committee keep the MHTF increase, which is Senate Amendment 8, offered by [Sen. Jolie Justus](#). She is on the conference committee, and she will be working to keep that amendment in the bill.

You can help by contacting the other members of the conference committee. You can click on their name for a link to their website with contact information. The House conferees are Representatives [Steve Hobbs](#), [Jason Brown](#), [Mark Bruns](#), [Trent Skaggs](#) and [Jake Hummel](#). The Senate conferees are Senators [John Griesheimer](#), [Tom Dempsey](#), [Carl Vogel](#), [Wes Shoemyer](#) and [Jolie Justus](#).

The important language to keep in the bill is, *“Two dollars of the additional fee collected under this subsection shall be credited to the Missouri Housing Trust Fund.”*

Points you may want to include in your communication:

- This funding is crucial to assist in the prevention of foreclosures, evictions, and loss of rental housing;
- Funding levels have dropped significantly over the last few years from a high of over \$6 million to an estimate available funding for 2010 to be at or below \$3 million;
- These funds are used to leverage other state and federal funding at a rate of \$11 for every \$1 of MHTF monies;
- Annual grant requests for these funds are approximately four times the funding available.

In these difficult times this is the only Missouri dollars available to address foreclosures and evictions. For more information visit the [Coalition for the Missouri Housing Trust Fund](#) Resource Web Pages, which include the Senatorial and House District “At A Glance” Statistical Sheets and the Missouri State “At a Glance” Statistical Sheet.

## MASW Priority: Fighting Hunger

### Food Stamp Supplement Bill “ThisClose” to Passing

Now is the time to contact the members of the Senate committee that heard [HB 156](#), the bill to create a state supplement for seniors that get the minimum monthly allotment of food stamps. The committee needs to vote the bill “Do Pass” early in the week! Senators [Norma Champion](#), [Eric Schmitt](#), [Jane Cunningham](#), [Tom Dempsey](#), [Bill Stouffer](#), [Jolie Justus](#), [Jeff Smith](#) and [Yvonne Wilson](#).

*Salus Populi Suprema Lex Esto*

## MASW Priority: Economic Justice

### Unprecedented Array of Witnesses in Opposition

In my [22 years in the State Capitol](#), I have never seen a bill *that had already passed the House* draw more than 15 witnesses to testify against it in Senate committee. I have rarely seen so many witnesses against one bill, but the few times I have it has been when the bill had its first hearing.

To have a bill that passed the House draw not just the number, but the broad, virtually unprecedented array of witnesses against that [HCS HJR 36](#) did when it reached its committee hearing in the Senate, shows how completely out of touch with reality the House majority has become this session.

On Tuesday (5/5) the Senate [Ways & Means Committee](#) continued its hearing from the previous week on HCS HJR 36, the so-called "Fair Tax" proposal to impose a state sales tax on everything you purchase (including services like medical exams and service fees on your IRA) while abolishing the income tax paid by corporations and all individuals.

Speaking out against this radical, untested plan on Tuesday were, in addition to MASW, the [Missouri NEA](#), the [Missouri Credit Union Association](#), the [Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy](#), [Missourians for Tax Justice](#), the [Missouri Budget Project](#), [Catholic Charities of the St. Louis Archdiocese](#), the [Missouri Press Association](#), and several disability advocates.

Committee Chair [Carl Vogel](#) had continued the hearing from last week because the extensive list of witnesses against the bill did not have time to testify, following the proponents (almost all of whom are members of the "Fair Tax" interest group) in the limited time the committee had prior to the Senate going back into session.

Testifying against the measure last week were the [Missouri Association of Realtors](#), the [Missouri Retailers Association](#), the [Title Insurance industry](#), the [Missouri Broadcasters Association](#), the [Society of Certified Public Accountants](#) and the [Partnership for Children](#).

The committee took no action on the proposal after hearing all witnesses.

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