



# WEEKLY REPORT

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## **Senate's First Order of Business Is Rejection of Higher Salaries For Lawmakers, Judges and Statewide Elected Officials.**

JEFFERSON CITY -- The Missouri state Senate this week wasted no time in passing a resolution that blocks a proposed pay hike for themselves, as well as statewide officials such as the governor and treasurer, and all state judges in Missouri.

On the same day that the governor asked for \$750 million in higher taxes, the Missouri Senate passed Senate Concurrent Resolution 1, which blocks a pay hike plan that would increase lawmakers' pay by 11.6 percent over the next two years, and boosts salaries for judges by \$12,000 per year over the next two years.

The higher salaries were recommended by a commission that is appointed every two years to review pay for top state officials. The way the law is structured, the salary schedule takes effect unless the Senate and House adopt a resolution rejecting the recommendations by Feb. 1.

The salaries recommended by the commission were significantly higher than those recommended by the governor for rank-and-file state workers, who have received no salary increases for the past two years.

All state salaries, like all state expenditures, must be approved by the Legislature through the appropriations process. Even though higher salaries have been recommended by the Governor and the salary commission, the state is facing a \$1 billion shortfall between current spending and the amount the state expects to receive in revenues.

By rejecting the salary commission recommendation, and assuming the House will also give its approval to the resolution, the Legislature will ensure that lawmakers, statewide officials and judges will not receive a pay increase.

The resolution pertains only to lawmakers, statewide officials and judges. Other state workers are not affected by the salary commission's recommendation.

In debate on the measure, questions were raised about the fairness of treating the top officials differently than other state workers in determining the salaries they receive.

While the Legislature still has the safeguard of holding the line on salaries by limiting the budget, citizens may get an opportunity to vote to eliminate this commission.

The commission has made recommendations since 1996. Their recommendations have never been fully implemented, and several court cases were required to ensure that their recommendations were a cap on salaries, not a mandate that would have restricted the ability of lawmakers to limit salaries through the appropriations process.

Normally, legislative action is required for a change to take place. Under the salary commission system, however, higher salary limits take effect unless legislation is passed to block them. Normally, lawmakers have four and one-half months to pass bills and resolutions. Under this system, lawmakers have less than one month to block the salary recommendations.

Automatically increasing salary limits for lawmakers, statewide elected officials and judges may not have been the intention of voters when they approved the salary commission in 1994. But blocking the higher salaries recommended by the commission was most certainly the intention of the Missouri Senate this week in passing a resolution to kill the proposed pay increases.

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