

State Senator  
**DOUG**

**BECK**



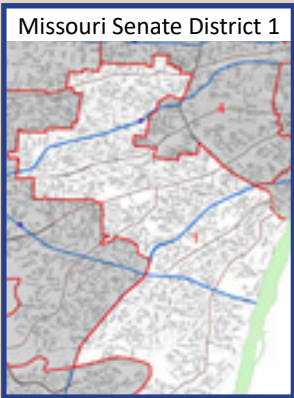
**Citizens Guide to  
Missouri Government**



# SENATOR DOUG BECK



Missouri Senate District 1



Dear neighbor,

Thank you for entrusting me to be your voice in the Missouri Senate. While everyone cannot hold office, it is imperative each citizen engages in the legislative process for democracy to be effective.

As a proud father, grandfather, St. Louis native and member of the United Association Local 562, it is an honor representing you in the Capitol. Please use the information in this guide to be informed and stay engaged in the policymaking process.

Please contact me if you require additional information or assistance navigating state government.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Doug Beck".

Senator Doug Beck



Missouri State Capitol

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*This guide is based on “The Citizen’s Guide to Government” publication produced by the Missouri House of Representatives.*

# HOW CITIZENS CAN PARTICIPATE IN GOVERNMENT



## THE CITIZEN'S ROLE

Although not everyone can be involved in politics to the extent of holding public office, there are a number of effective ways for citizens to make their views known.

**Initiative Petitions:** A group of voters may draft a proposed law and require that it be submitted to the people for passage through an initiative, a process in which advocates collect signatures from registered voters on petitions. The Legislature may also submit a referendum to the people for approval or disapproval.

**Communications:** Many citizens express their opinions through correspondence with their legislator. By calling, writing or emailing, you may tell your legislator your views on a proposed piece of legislation.

## VOTER REGISTRATION

Voting is the most important, easy and effective way to make your views known. A potential voter must be 18 years old, a U.S. citizen, a Missouri resident and have identification to register. Registration is open until the fourth Wednesday before an election.

Contact your county clerk for information about your local election authority or to change your address. You may also [register to vote](#) on the secretary of state's website.

Although you do not need a photo ID to vote, you may apply for a free, nondriver ID through the [Department of Revenue](#).



# LOCAL GOVERNMENT



City and county governments have the power to regulate their own affairs based on the Missouri Constitution and state laws. Most day-to-day interactions Missourians have with government center around their local administrations and public servants. Local governments are the primary resource for protection, administration of justice, infrastructure and social services.

## Map of St. Louis County



### **ST. LOUIS COUNTY ADMINISTRATION**

41 S. Central Ave. • Clayton, MO 63105  
314-615-7046

[administration@stlouiscomo.gov](mailto:administration@stlouiscomo.gov)

[St. Louis County Website](#)

# STRUCTURE OF MISSOURI GOVERNMENT



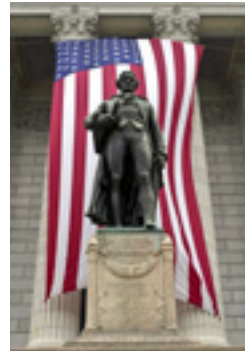
Missouri's government is divided into three branches. The legislative branch makes the laws, the executive branch administers the laws and the judicial branch interprets the laws. Having three branches of government ensures that no one group can dominate the government through a concentration of power, creating a checks-and-balances system of protection. Distribution of powers among state officials is a safeguard so citizens are fairly represented.

## LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

The General Assembly consists of the House of Representatives and the Senate. The General Assembly meets in the State Capitol in Jefferson City from the first Wednesday after the first Monday of January through the first Friday following the second Monday of May for a regular session and returns in September for a veto session.

The only other times the Legislature convenes is when the General Assembly calls a special session or the governor calls an extraordinary session to address a specific topic. An extra session cannot exceed 60 days in duration.

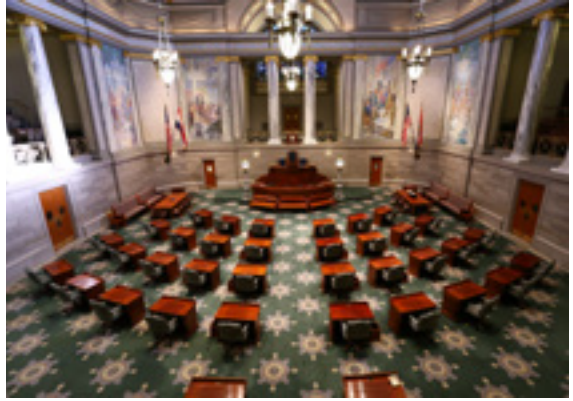
When legislators are not in session, they continue to serve as the political voice of their constituents by making appearances at civic events, giving speeches and engaging in community activities in their home districts. Listening to the concerns and ideas of constituents helps legislators decide what bills to sponsor in the upcoming session.



Legislators may start to pre-file legislation for the coming session on Dec. 1, and the last day to file a bill is March 1. Although hundreds of proposals are filed each session, only a small percentage make it through the process and become law.

## SENATE

Missouri is divided into 34 senatorial districts, each containing approximately 180,000 people. Senators are elected for four-year terms and may only serve two terms. To be eligible, a person must be at least 30 years old, a qualified voter in the state for three years and a resident of the district for one year.



The president pro tem is elected by the members to lead the Senate. He or she is responsible for appointing all committee chairs and members, except as otherwise provided. He or she assigns all bills to committees and signs official actions of the Senate.

## HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

The Missouri House of Representatives is composed of 163 districts, each containing approximately 37,000 people. Members of the House are elected for two-year terms and may serve a maximum of four terms. To be eligible, a person must be 24 years old, a qualified voter in the state for at least two years and resident of the district for at least one year.



The speaker of the house is elected by the members and serves as the presiding officer. His or her responsibilities include appointing committee chairs, establishing the number of members on each committee and appointing the majority party members of committees. He or she also assigns all bills to committees and signs all official actions of the House.

# THE MAKING OF THE LAW



Legislators may ask for input on legislation, but they decide which bills they will file each session. A bill may originate in either chamber, with the exception of appropriations bills, which are always introduced in the House of Representatives.

Since the process is similar in both chambers, this guide will follow a bill introduced in the Senate. After the bill's sponsor files the bill with the secretary of the Senate, it must be first read. Then, it may be second read and referred to a committee by the president pro tem.

Once the bill is assigned to committee, the chair may schedule a hearing. During the hearing, citizens may testify on the bill in favor, opposition or for informational purposes. When the committee goes into executive session, amendments can be offered, or the committee can completely rewrite the bill and offer a senate committee substitute. After all the changes have been made, the committee votes on the bill. If a majority of those present vote to "do pass" the bill out of committee, it heads to the full Senate where it may be placed on the perfection calendar.

Once placed on the perfection calendar, a bill may be brought up for debate. At this stage of the process, all members of the Senate have a chance to express their views on the bill. During debate, amendments may be offered and voted on, or the Senate may choose to return to the introduced bill. Each time a change is offered, the Senate must vote on that change. After all debate has ended, the members vote on it. If passed, the bill is considered perfected. A simple majority of those present in the chamber is all that is required for passage. Then, the bill may be placed on the third reading calendar.

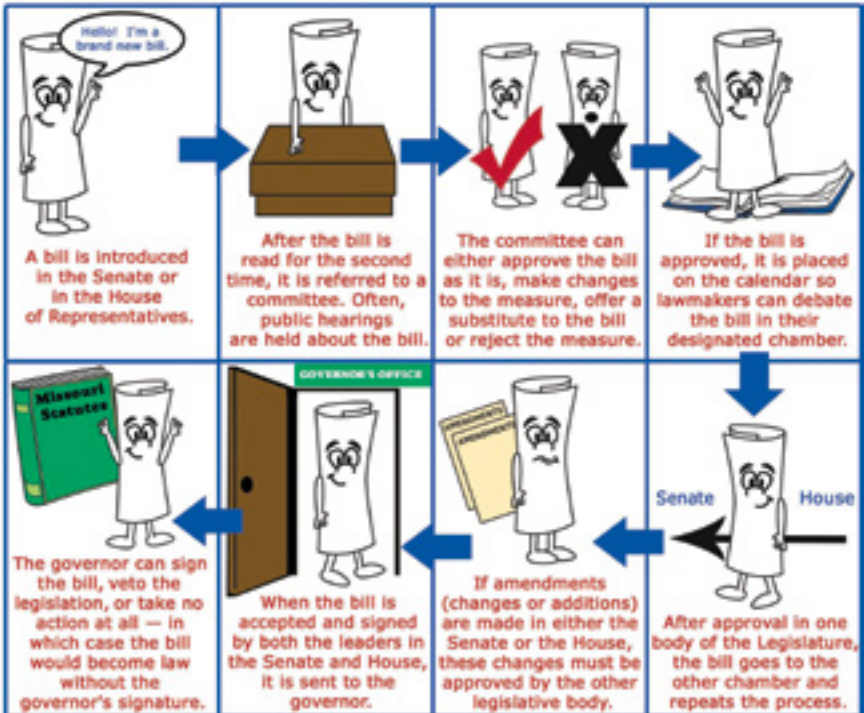
On the third reading calendar, the bill is again debated before the Senate, but not amended. After all debate has ended, the members cast their votes. To pass a bill on third reading, a constitutional majority is required. That equates to 18 out of 34 votes in the Senate, and 82 out of 163 in the House.



When a bill is passed by the Senate, it starts the process over in the House. If the House makes any changes, the bill must go back to the Senate for its approval. If the Senate rejects any of the changes made by the House, the bill will go to a conference committee composed of members of both chambers. If the conference committee reaches a compromise, its report must be adopted by both the House and Senate before the bill is Truly Agreed and Finally Passed. It is then signed by the president pro tem and the speaker of the House and sent to the governor.

If the governor signs the bill or takes no action, it becomes law on Aug. 28 or later. However, if the bill contains an emergency clause, it goes into effect earlier. If the governor vetoes the bill, it can only become law if two-thirds of members in both the Senate and House vote to override the veto.

## HOW A BILL BECOMES A LAW



*"The welfare of the people is the supreme law." - Great Seal of Missouri*



## EXECUTIVE BRANCH



The executive branch consists of the governor, lieutenant governor, attorney general, auditor, secretary of state, treasurer and all state departments. All six statewide officers are elected individually and independently of one another, which means the governor has no control over the other five executive officials.

The governor must be at least 30 years of age, a U.S. citizen for the past 15 years and a Missouri resident for the past 10 years. He or she has the power to veto a bill, to pardon people who have committed crimes and to act as our state militia's commander-in-chief.

## JUDICIAL BRANCH



The third branch of Missouri government is the judicial. This branch is divided into three levels: circuit and associate courts, court of appeals and the Supreme Court. The judicial branch deals in two areas of law: criminal, which covers cases that cause injury

to the state or society; and civil, which covers cases of disagreement between persons over the interpretation of the law.

# STATE INFORMATION SYSTEMS



- [Official Missouri State Website](#)

The official state website contains more than 650 online services, state news and events, Missouri facts and figures, job openings, road conditions, tax information and much more.

- [Missouri House of Representatives](#)

The House website has links to look up your legislator, access bill summaries, track legislation and watch live debates.



- [Missouri Senate](#)

The Senate website provides information about session, hearing schedules, audio of committee hearings and live debates.

- [Legislative Library](#)

The Legislative Library is located on the third floor of the Capitol. Citizens may check out materials, research archived session reports and find current resources.

- [Missouri State Library](#)

The Missouri State Library promotes the development and improvement of library services throughout the state and provides support to the executive and legislative branches.

- [Health and Senior Services Directory](#)

This directory lists all of the available programs for senior citizens, families, disease prevention and community health services.

- [Veterans/Military Benefits and Resource Portal](#)

The benefits and resource portal serves as an informational tool and service guide to help veterans discover possible benefits.

- [MAP Your Taxes](#) to see how your tax dollars are spent.



# FISCAL NOTES



Like businesses and families, the state must operate within a budget. The cost to our state is very important when considering items to add or remove from the budget. This is why all legislation presented for consideration by the Missouri General Assembly, with the exception of appropriations bills, is required by statute to have a fiscal note detailing what, if any, monetary impact the legislation would have on the state. Although several versions of a bill may be presented during a legislative session, each bill submitted must have a separate fiscal note. If an amendment is adopted that changes a bill's impact, the fiscal note must be revised.

The Oversight Division, an impartial, nonpolitical office within the legislative branch, gathers information from each element of state government that would be affected by a bill and prepares the fiscal note. To help ensure there is no political preference, input from outside resources, such as lobbyists or legislators, is prohibited in preparation of a fiscal note, unless information is requested by the fiscal analyst preparing the note.

A fiscal note typically contains information about operating costs, anticipated salaries, capital costs over a specific period and inflation factors.



# ARCHIVES



The Missouri State Archives, a division of the secretary of state's office that was created by the Legislature in 1965, is the repository for both current and historical Missouri records dating as far back as 1770. The trove of information and records stored in the archives helps define who we are as Missourians, where we came from and what we have overcome and accomplished.



The Archives currently houses more than 336 million pages of paper, 770,000 photographs, 9,000 maps, 66,000 reels of microfilm, 560 cubic feet of published state documents and 1,000 audio/video recordings. The records are available to state government officials and the general public.

The Archives includes records from the census, counties, municipalities, courts, land and military sources. Birth and death records before 1909 are also available. These records can be searched in person, online or by making an appointment with a specialist. Microfilm and published materials are available in the research room.

## [Missouri State Archives Virtual Tour](#)



# FEDERAL GOVERNMENT



## LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

Missourians elect eight representatives and two senators to represent our state on the federal level in Washington, D.C. The United States Congress is the legislative branch of the federal government, and it works in conjunction with our nation's executive and judicial branches to exercise the sovereign power of the people of the United States.

### United States Senate

Each state is represented by two senators who are elected to six-year terms. These officials provide a smaller body of more experienced lawmakers to counterbalance the workings of the shorter-term House of Representatives.

### United States House of Representatives

Each state's population determines how many representatives they have in Washington, D.C. With our population of 6.137 million, Missouri is allowed eight representatives. Congressional maps are redrawn every decade to correspond with the most recent census data.

## EXECUTIVE BRANCH

The **executive branch** enforces laws and consists of the president, vice president, cabinet and executive departments.

## JUDICIAL BRANCH

The **judicial branch** decides the constitutionality of federal laws. It consists of the U.S. Supreme Court, 13 circuit courts and 94 district courts.