



News Release

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New Version of Sales Tax Proposal Exempts Churches and Catholic School Tuition

March 4, 2010, JEFFERSON CITY, MO - Senator Chuck Purgason (R-Caulfield) has put forward a new version of his proposed sales tax that exempts churches, charitable agencies and private and parochial schools.

In its original form, Purgason's proposed constitutional amendment (SJR 29) would have removed the sales tax exemption currently enjoyed by churches.

The original proposal also would have required private and parochial schools to collect sales tax on school tuition charges. Catholic Charities and other nonprofit agencies would have had to pay the new sales tax.

Senator Purgason brought his new version of the legislation to the Senate floor on Thursday, March 4, as Senators prepared to leave Jefferson City for spring break.

The legislation proposes to remove existing state taxes, such as the income tax, with an expanded state sales tax. The new version caps the sales tax at no more than 7 percent.

During the opening discussion of SJR 29, Senator Luann Ridgeway (R-Smithville) lauded the new version for exempting churches and private and parochial schools.

"We've heard people's concerns loud and clear and we've changed the proposal," Senator Ridgeway said.

Mike Hoey, the executive director of the Missouri Catholic Conference, said that Senators got a lot of contacts from Missouri Catholics opposing the tax on churches and Catholic schools.

"This just shows that citizens can make a difference when they make their voices heard," Hoey said.

The Missouri Catholic Conference had opposed the tax on churches, schools and nonprofits. “We alerted Catholics to problems in the bill and they responded,” Hoey noted.

Hoey said the Missouri Catholic Conference still has concerns about whether the new tax will disproportionately burden the poor. “We will be evaluating the new version and assessing its economic impact on the poor,” he said.

The Senate took no final action on the legislation but is expected to resume debate on the issue after spring break. Senators will be returning to Jefferson City on Monday, March 15.

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