



## 2022 Midterm Election Results

Missouri Republicans now hold every statewide office, following the November midterm elections. According to the Missouri Secretary of State's Office, voter turnout was 50.1%. Missouri Attorney General Eric Schmitt will be Missouri's next U.S. Senator, after defeating Democrat candidate Trudy Busch Valentine. Schmitt will replace retiring Republican Senator Roy Blunt. Missouri Treasurer Scott Fitzpatrick was elected as the new state auditor. Governor Mike Parson will now need to appoint a new attorney general and a new state treasurer.

Republicans maintain the supermajority in the legislature. Leadership roles have been chosen in Missouri's General Assembly. Senate Republicans chose Sen. Caleb Rowden (District 19) as Senate President Pro-Tem. Rowden previously served as Majority Floor Leader. Sen. Cindy O'Laughlin (District 18) was chosen to take on that role. Sen. John Rizzo (District 11) will continue to serve as Minority Floor Leader.

This was the first statewide election since HB 1878 was signed into law, requiring voters to provide a valid photo ID to vote. No-excuse absentee voting, which opened two weeks prior to the election, was also a first in the state. Secretary of State Jay Ashcroft told local news outlets his office won't know the full effect of early voting until more elections are complete.

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Amendment 1	.....	Expanding the state treasurer's investment options	.....	FAILED
Amendment 3	.....	Legalizing recreational marijuana for those 21 and older and granting expungements for prior cannabis convictions	.....	PASSED
Amendment 4	.....	Increasing Kansas City's police funding	.....	PASSED
Amendment 5	.....	National Guard forming its own department separate from the Department of Public Safety	.....	PASSED

## MCC Welcomes New Legislative Analyst

The Missouri Catholic Conference (MCC) introduces Curt Wichmer as its new legislative analyst. Curt first became acquainted with the MCC over a decade ago when he participated in our Annual Assembly's mock legislative session activity for high school students. A recent graduate of St. Louis University School of Law, Curt previously used his legal knowledge with the Catholic Immigration Law Project to provide pro bono legal assistance to asylum-seeking clients. Focusing his legal studies in the fields of immigration and criminal law, Curt also worked with the Immigration Justice Campaign during law school, where he received the organization's Volunteer of the Quarter award in March 2022. He also served on the Catholic Newman Center's Student Council while obtaining his undergraduate degree at Truman State University. A St. Louis native, Curt is an avid fan of the St. Louis Blues, taking his first and middle names from the goalie Curtis Joseph.



# MCC Staff Member Retiring After Decades of Service



After 34 years serving the Missouri Catholic Conference, senior staff associate Rita Linhardt is retiring. Rita began her career with the MCC in 1988 as a registered lobbyist with a primary area of emphasis on corrections and the death penalty. Over the years, she has assisted with strategic planning on legislative issues and the MCC Annual Assembly. Join us in celebrating Rita and her accomplishments as we wish her a happy retirement!

## Legislative successes

In 2002, after ten years of working on a bill that would exempt persons with developmental disabilities from the death penalty, the MCC was finally successful in getting such a bill passed. To be eligible for exemption, a person would need to have a sub-average IQ, have extensive limitations in living skills, and the disability had to be documented by age 18.

In 2014, Missouri passed a law that allowed individuals with felony drug convictions for possession or use of a controlled substance to be eligible to receive food stamps. The MCC felt it was unfair to single out drug offenders from receiving food stamps when 18 states had modified or lifted the ban.

Another success came in 2016 when legislation passed addressing a range of 30-40 years for a juvenile convicted of first-degree murder. Before the legislation, the only option for juveniles convicted of first-degree murder under Missouri law was life without parole (LWOP). In 2012, the U.S. Supreme Court (*Miller v. Alabama*) declared that juveniles could no longer be sentenced automatically to LWOP, leaving Missouri with no sentencing options. The bill also states that juvenile offenders can be eligible to request a parole hearing after 25 years.

## Death Penalty

Rita is a founding member of Missourians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty and served for 16 years as Chair of the Board. She has given talks on the death penalty to organizations, organized vigils, and lobbied for legislation. Rita was responsible for drafting a clemency request for each inmate with an execution date. To date, there have been 93 requests for clemency submitted by the MCC.



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## Blessings for the Christmas Season

The MCC wishes you and your family a blessed Christmas and New Year! We are so grateful for your participation as a MOCAN member in 2022 and are looking forward to working together through the 2023 session.

### Blessing of a Christmas Tree:

The use of the Christmas tree is relatively modern. Its origins are found in the medieval mystery plays that depicted the tree of paradise and the Christmas light or candle that symbolized Christ, the Light of the world. According to custom, the Christmas tree is set up just before Christmas and may remain in place until the Solemnity of Epiphany. The lights of the tree are illuminated after the prayer of blessing, according to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

"Dear God, two thousand years ago, you brought your son, Jesus into this world to teach us the power of love and sacrifice. As we raise this tree, we remember his birth and the meaning of his life for us. Bless this tree as a symbol of our celebration of Jesus' birth and our gratitude for his sacrifice. May the joy this tree brings and the gifts we place under it remind us of the many gifts you have given us. We ask your blessings upon our loved ones, this day and always. Amen."

