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2021 Missouri General Assembly Convenes

What will the be the focus of the 2021 state legislative session? (pg. 1)

2021 MCC Public Policy Priorities

In faithfulness to the Good News of Jesus Christ, the Missouri Catholic Conference seeks to create a culture that respects the sanctity and dignity of all human life, especially the most vulnerable among us. In the light of the moral teaching of the Catholic Church, the MCC and the Missouri bishops call government officials, legislators and all citizens to a respectful discourse about the challenges facing our state and nation. This agenda does not reflect all of the MCC's concerns, but those that require urgent action at this time. (pg. 2)

State of the State and National Government

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Messenger on COVID-19
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Good News

Bringing the Light of Christ to Missouri | January/February 2021



On Wednesday, January 6, 2021, the Missouri General Assembly convened for the opening of the 2021 legislative session. Its second in the midst of a global pandemic, this session promises to be interesting in many ways. Though the body of the Senate and House have remained relatively unchanged, as we'll discuss later in this *Good News*, much about this session will be—to use the 2020 word of the year—unprecedented.

The Missouri Senate by tradition has been slow to adopt new technology, prohibiting laptops on the Senate floor, for example. However, with the pandemic continuing to impact how business is conducted at the Capitol, the Senate will be making changes to make public hearings even more accessible to the public and to lobbyists. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Senate hearings were not broadcast over the airways; the body preferring traditional in-person hearings. As a result, Senate hearing rooms were often overcapacity with some attendees standing for lack of seats. However, last session, the

Senate began conducting hearings from the Senate chamber to allow for social distancing and providing audio for those unable to attend. The Senate will likely be adding audio capability to hearing rooms this year. The House, which already has audio and video available for hearings and other activities, is going a step further to protect its members and the public by installing video links in committee rooms that will allow testimony to be submitted virtually.

Several bills related to COVID-19 have been filed in both the Senate and the House, some setting restrictions and time limits on local and state government emergency health provisions without further legislative or local council review. Other bills attempt to offer parents the ability to choose in-person education options for their children in districts offering virtual options only. The pandemic has upended the legislative process, and which bills will get attention and traction is yet to be determined.

2021 Public Policy Priorities & Church Teaching



Protect Human Life

"It is impossible to further the common good without acknowledging and defending the right to life, upon which all the other inalienable rights of individuals are founded and from which they develop." (Saint John Paul II, Gospel of Life, par. 101)

Welcome and Accompany Immigrants and Refugees

"Every stranger who knocks at our door is an opportunity for an encounter with Jesus Christ, who identifies with the welcomed and rejected strangers of every age." (Pope Francis, 2017 Message for World Day of Migrants and Refugees)



Advance Social and Economic Justice for All

"Certainly, it is the proper function of authority to arbitrate, in the name of the common good, between various particular interests; but it should make accessible to each what is needed to lead a truly human life: food, clothing, health, work, education and culture, suitable information, the right to establish a family, and so on." (Catechism, par. 1908)

Uphold and Strengthen Marriage and Family

"The importance of the family for the life and well-being of society entails a particular responsibility for society to support and strengthen marriage and the family." (Catechism, par. 2210)



Defend Religious Liberty

"[T]he right to religious freedom has its foundation in the very dignity of the human person as this dignity is known through the revealed word of God and by reason itself." (Declaration on Religious Freedom, par. 2)

Support Educational Opportunities

"As those first responsible for the education of their children, parents have the right to choose a school for them which corresponds to their own convictions." (Catechism, par. 2229)



Reform Criminal Justice

"We believe that both victims and offender[s] are children of God. Despite their very different claims on society, their lives and dignity should be protected and respected. We seek justice, not vengeance." (U.S. Bishops, A Catholic Perspective on Crime and Criminal Justice)

Promote Civility and Faith in the Democratic Process

"[R]esponsible authority also means authority exercised with those virtues that make it possible to put power into practice as service (patience, modesty, moderation, charity, efforts to share), an authority exercised by persons who are able to accept the common good, and not prestige or the gaining of personal advantages, as the true goal of their work." (Compendium, par. 410)



America Chooses Divided Government; Missouri Remains Unchanged

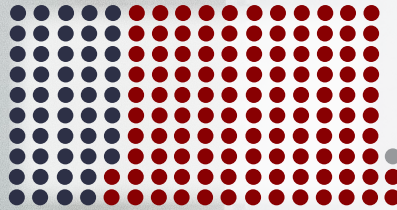
November's election results made little, if any, changes to the make-up of the Missouri General Assembly. Republicans retained their supermajority status in both the Missouri House (114-49) and the Missouri Senate (24-10). In addition, Republicans retained control of the statewide elected offices, save the Auditor's office, which Nicole Galloway will retain after her failed bid for governor.

Missouri Senate



10, 24

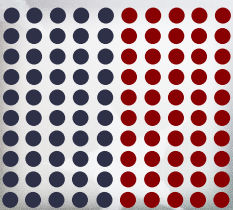
Missouri House



48, 114, 1 vacancy

Nationally, Democrats retained control of the U.S. House, but by the slimmest margin in a century, holding on to 222 seats with Republicans winning 211. One New York House seat remains undecided, and one seat is vacant after a Louisiana Republican died of COVID-19. Following the runoff elections in Georgia, the Democrats will take control of the U.S. Senate where there will be 50 seats held by each party, but a tie-breaking vote would be cast by Vice President Kamala Harris, a former member of the Senate from California.

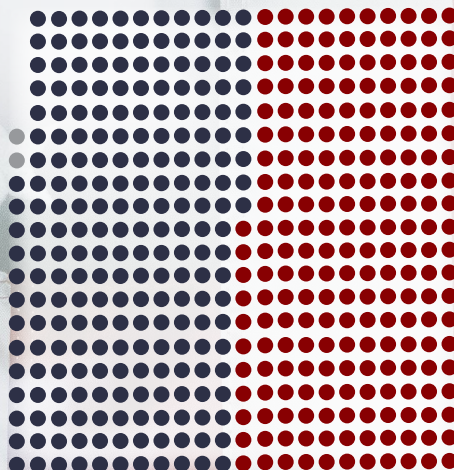
U.S. Senate



50, 50

Tie-breaking vote cast
by Vice President Harris

U.S. House



222, 211, 2 vacancies

MCC Legislative Toolbox

The Missouri Catholic Conference seeks to inform, educate, and mobilize citizens on the major issues confronting our state and nation. You can learn about the MCC's legislative priorities at www.mocatholic.org and also access the legislative toolbox, a set of guides and graphics that can help you understand how the legislature functions and how you can get involved. You can take a look inside the toolbox [here](#).

MISSOURI LEGISLATIVE CALENDAR

Stay up to date on important legislative dates with this helpful calendar.

STATE AND FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE LINKS

Find your state and federal legislators by using these directories, and also learn more about the legislative processes in Missouri and at the federal level.

LEGISLATIVE GLOSSARY

You're not the only one who gets lost in legislative jargon—this glossary will help you learn legislative terms.

HOW A BILL BECOMES A LAW

It's probably been a few years since you've seen Schoolhouse Rock, so we've provided a graphic that explains the path a bill must take to become a law in Missouri.

COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR LEGISLATOR

Want to send a letter, make a phone call or meet in person with your legislator? Find out how in this guide.



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Questions? Contact us!

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Next MCC *Messenger* Focused on COVID-19 Vaccines

The first MCC *Messenger* of 2021 will focus on approved COVID-19 vaccines. In this edition, we aim to answer your questions about the vaccines, including those related to church teaching as well as general questions about how the vaccine functions. A new episode of MCC from the Capitol, our podcast, will accompany this *Messenger* featuring interviews with Bishop McKnight of the Diocese of Jefferson City and Dr. Keith Starke, a Catholic internist at Mercy Hospital in Chesterfield who serves on the St. Louis Coronavirus Task Force. We look forward to publishing this *Messenger* on our website at mocatholic.org and in February editions of your diocesan papers, and encourage you to read it and/or listen to the podcast to learn more about the COVID-19 vaccines from a Catholic perspective.



**The Missouri Catholic Advocacy Network
Text MOCAN to 50457 to receive text alerts!**

Join the 10,000 + Catholic Missourians who make up MOCAN. If you're already a member, encourage your family, friends, and fellow parishoners to join! As MOCAN grows, so does the Catholic voice in Missouri's Capitol. Visit mocatholic.org or send us an email at mocatholic@mocatholic.org for details.



Dear *Good News* reader,

I hope you are enjoying the Missouri Catholic Conference (MCC) bi-monthly newsletter, *Good News*, and the other communications we issue, such as the MCC *Messenger*, which appears in the diocesan papers on a quarterly basis. We try our best to keep you informed about developing issues that pose great moral questions for our state and nation and alert you when action is needed. We encourage you to check out our podcast, MCC from the Capitol (available on our website, Spotify, Apple Podcasts, and Google Podcasts) in which we take a closer look at public policy issues and how they impact the Church.

With your help over the last several years, we have passed historic pro-life laws and made sure Catholic high school students can receive A+ scholarships. In 2021, the MCC will continue its work on a number of important public policy issues, including providing women facing crisis pregnancies with Alternatives to Abortion, repealing the death penalty, ensuring adequate social services and healthcare for the poor, and promoting educational opportunities for all school children, including those attending Catholic schools.

The MCC will not succeed in any of these efforts without the involvement of committed Catholics like you. Without your help, the needs of the most vulnerable among us are likely to be forgotten in the halls of Congress and in our State Capitol. That is why the MCC wants to stay in contact with you, so you know what is going on and can respond by contacting your elected officials when critical legislation is pending.

You currently receive our written MCC communications for free. At this time I am asking you to consider a donation to help the MCC. If you can afford to give \$20, \$30, \$40, \$50 or more, your donation will help us to continue providing you with our MCC publications. To make a donation, please use the envelope provided, or visit our website (www.mocatholic.org) to donate by credit or debit card. If you cannot give a donation at this time, you will still continue to receive *Good News* at no charge. If you would prefer to receive our information electronically, please contact us with your email address.

Thank you and God bless!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tyler McClay". The signature is stylized with large, sweeping loops and a long horizontal stroke at the bottom.

Tyler McClay
Executive Director and General Counsel