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House Members Approve Voter ID Legislation (HJR 1 and HB 30)

The House took action this week to pass legislation intended to protect the integrity of the voting process. The members of the House passed two pieces of legislation - one a proposed constitutional amendment and the other a statutory change - that would put in place a requirement that voters must show photo identification before casting their ballots.

This is an issue that has been debated in Missouri and in other states for years now. In fact, Missouri saw a voter ID bill signed into law in 2006 only to see it later struck down by the Missouri Supreme Court. Since that time, the legislature has continued to work on the issue with the goal of finding a compromise that would require voters to prove their identity before voting without disenfranchising Missourians who don't already have a photo ID.

The legislation passed this week is meant to address the primary concern of critics by providing a government-issued photo ID at no charge to anyone who doesn't have one. An amendment added on the floor also provides those without proper identification with a means to obtain a free copy of a birth certificate, which would be needed to obtain a government-issued ID. In addition, to prevent the requirement from being a barrier to those who cannot obtain an ID and those born before 1950 who may not have documentation such as a birth certificate, the bill would allow these Missourians to vote by provisional ballot.

The House has advanced similar proposals in the past only to see them bog down in the Senate. As we send these pieces of legislation to the other side of the building, we will do our best to work toward a compromise with our Senate colleagues so that we can move these bills all the way through the legislative process. Keep in mind that the proposed constitutional amendment will require a vote of the people in order to be approved. Only if the people of Missouri decide that they want a system of voter identification will one then be put in place.

In the meantime, I am interested to hear your thoughts on this issue. Do you think it is important to require a photo ID to vote just as we require photo IDs to pick up a prescription or board a plane? Or do

you believe a photo ID requirement would serve as a barrier to prevent some Missourians from voting? I look forward to hearing your responses.

House Approves Resolution to Challenge Constitutionality of President's Executive Amnesty (HCR 12)

In the same week a federal judge in Texas temporarily stopped the implementation of President Obama's executive amnesty, the Missouri House adopted a resolution urging our Attorney General to join 26 other states that have filed suit against the executive order.

The lawsuit filed and joined by a coalition of states alleges that the president violated his obligations under the Constitution's Take Care Clause, as well as the Administrative Procedure Act and federal immigration statutes. The lawsuit claims changes to these laws should be made by Congress, not the president.

HCR 12 approved by the House urges Attorney General Koster to join the lawsuit and oppose this president's decision to suspend the nation's immigration laws. I think it's important to point out that this suit is not about the issue of immigration itself, but rather the glaring overreach of the president's authority. Our government is meant to have a system of checks and balances that require the branches of government to work together in order to put new laws into effect. When the president circumvents the system through an executive order it flies in the face of our Constitution. Moving forward, we want to see the branches of government work together to address this incredibly important issue of immigration.

House Committee Considers Legislation to Combat Sex Trafficking (HB 152)

Congresswoman Ann Wagner came to the State Capitol this week to speak in support of legislation designed to protect young people from the awful crime of sex trafficking. Wagner, who has sponsored similar legislation on the federal level, wants to raise awareness of the fact that it is not currently a crime to publish advertisements for sexual activity with a minor. While it seems hard to believe, it is true, and it's something we want to change this year.

The legislation considered by the House Civil and Criminal Proceedings Committee would expand the crime of sexual trafficking of a child to include advertising a child participating in a commercial sexual act. Individuals who engage in such advertising would be guilty of sexual trafficking of a child, which is a felony offense in Missouri with a possible maximum sentence of life in prison.

Our hope with this bill is to put an end to the many websites and online advertisers who are profiting from the sexual exploitation of innocent young people. With this bill, we can give law enforcement officials the tools they need to investigate and prosecute the despicable individuals who knowingly advertise the victims of sex trafficking. Together we can put a stop once and for all to these horrible advertisements that have been used for the sexual exploitation and enslavement of innocent victims.

It is an honor to serve you in the Missouri House. If you would like to contact me about this issue, please call 573-751-3783 or you can email me at rick.brattin@house.mo.gov.