

LEGAL UPDATES

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Missouri Just Rewrote Its Election Playbook: Here's What HB 1871 Means for You

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Missouri's election landscape is about to change significantly. House Bill 1871 (HB 1871), a comprehensive election reform package sponsored by Senator Sandy Crawford and overseen in the House by Representative Peggy McGaugh, has been signed by the Governor and will take effect on August 28, 2026.

The bill's path through the legislature was notable—accumulating nine amendments during Senate floor debate before reaching its final form as SS/SCS/HCS/HB 1871. The extensive amendment process reflected genuine legislative deliberation over provisions that will affect voters, candidates, and election officials throughout the state.

So, What's Actually in This Bill?

HB 1871 is what's known as an omnibus bill, meaning it addresses multiple related issues within a single piece of legislation. In this case, the bill touches nearly every aspect of Missouri's election system, from voter qualifications to campaign finance regulations. Some changes are procedural updates that streamline existing processes, while others represent substantive policy shifts.

Let's examine the key provisions and their implications . . .

A Second Chance at the Ballot Box: Expanded Voting Rights for Individuals with Felony Convictions

One of the most significant changes involves voting rights for individuals on probation or parole. Under previous law, anyone serving probation or parole

for any felony conviction was prohibited from voting. The new law substantially narrows this restriction.

Now, only individuals convicted of specific serious felonies (murder, Class A or B assault, incest, child endangerment, first-degree burglary, sexual offenses under Chapter 566, or pornography-related crimes under Chapter 573) face voting restrictions while on probation or parole. Individuals convicted of other felonies may vote while completing their sentences in the community.

This represents a meaningful expansion of voting rights and aligns Missouri more closely with states that have moved toward restoring civic participation for individuals who have completed incarceration.

Show Me the Money: Campaign Finance Transparency and Consumer Protection

The campaign finance provisions deserve particular attention, as they address growing concerns about transparency in political fundraising.

Disclosure Requirements

All campaign solicitations must now clearly disclose which committee will benefit from contributions and what percentage of donations will actually reach that committee. If intermediary organizations or businesses receive any portion of the contribution, that must be disclosed as well. This transparency allows donors to make informed decisions about where their money is going.

Recurring Contribution Reforms

The law introduces substantial consumer protections for recurring political contributions. Committees may only accept recurring donations with the contributor's affirmative consent—passive acceptance, including pre-checked boxes, no longer qualifies. Contributors must receive receipts for each recurring contribution, and these donations automatically terminate after the election (except for primary winners, whose recurring contributions may continue through the general election).

The Missouri Ethics Commission gains enforcement authority to impose civil penalties up to 100 times the contribution amount for violations. This creates a meaningful deterrent against deceptive fundraising practices.

Expanded Permitted Uses

Campaign funds may now be used for childcare expenses directly resulting from campaign activities and for personal security expenses for officeholders. These provisions acknowledge the

practical realities of modern campaigning and public service, particularly for candidates with young children or those facing security concerns.

Keeping Up with the Times: Modernizing Election Administration

Several provisions update election administration procedures to reflect current technology and practical needs.

Notice Requirements

Election authorities now have flexibility in how they provide public notice of elections. They may publish twice in at least two newspapers within six weeks of an election, or alternatively, mail notices to all registered voters and publish once in at least one newspaper. Additionally, notices may now be sent via email—a practical acknowledgment of how most people receive information in 2026.

Equipment Testing Timeline

The timeline for testing electronic voting equipment has been adjusted. Testing must now be completed at least 14 days prior to an election and no less than one week before “an election at which an electronic voting system is be used.” This provides election authorities with a clearer window for ensuring equipment functions properly.

Absentee Voting Procedures

Several categories of voters (including covered voters under federal law, interstate former residents, and new residents) must now vote at the election authority’s office on Election Day rather than at regular polling places if they are not registered. This consolidation helps election officials manage these special voting situations more effectively.

The law also makes confidential lists of absentee ballot applications for persons with permanent disabilities, protecting the privacy of voters with disabilities.

Attention, Candidates: What’s Changing for You

Filing Deadlines

The candidate filing period for local offices has shifted from the 17th-14th Tuesday before an election to the 16th-13th Tuesday before an election. If the 13th Tuesday falls on a holiday, the deadline extends to the next business day. Prospective candidates should note this change when planning their campaign timelines.

Lobbyists and Candidate Committees

The previous requirement that lobbyists dissolve all candidate committees has been modified. Registered lobbyists may now maintain candidate committees for county, municipal, or school board offices, provided they are not lobbying the same governmental body for which they seek office. This balances the right to seek office with concerns about conflicts of interest.

St. Louis-Specific Requirements

Candidates for offices performing county functions in the City of St. Louis must now provide proof of paid personal and real property tax receipts or no-tax-due statements to the election authority. This adds a layer of accountability for candidates seeking to serve in city government.

Voter Identification and Provisional Ballots

Voters who appear at an election authority's office to vote absentee without proper identification may cast a provisional ballot. The ballot will be counted if the voter returns with acceptable identification by 7:00 p.m. on Election Day. This provides a safety net for voters who forget their identification while maintaining the state's voter ID requirements.

The law also expands provisions governing provisional ballots to all public elections, not just primary and general elections, creating consistency across different types of elections.

Electioneering Restrictions and Write-In Candidates

The law expands restrictions on electioneering activities—now including petitioning—within 25 feet of polling place entrances during both Election Day and the absentee voting period. Election authorities may expand this buffer zone to 50 feet with proper public notice, though candidates themselves may still approach within 25 feet.

The exemption that previously allowed write-in votes to be counted when no candidate had filed for an office has been eliminated. Write-in votes will now only be counted for candidates who have filed a declaration of intent to be a write-in candidate, bringing greater clarity to the process.

Recognition for Election Workers

In a lighter but meaningful provision, the law designates August 12th as “Election Worker Appreciation Day” in Missouri. Poll workers and election officials perform essential work that often goes unrecognized, and this designation provides an opportunity to acknowledge their contributions to democratic governance.

What's Next?

As the August 28, 2026 effective date approaches, election authorities across Missouri will be implementing these changes and updating their procedures. Voters should familiarize themselves with the new requirements, particularly regarding absentee voting, voter identification, and electioneering restrictions. Employers, particularly those with PACs, should review the implications of this bill in light of their current policies and practices.

The breadth of HB 1871 reflects the complexity of administering elections in a modern democracy. While some provisions are technical updates, others represent substantive policy choices about access, transparency, and accountability in our electoral system.

For those interested in the complete legislative text and history, the Missouri Senate's bill tracking system provides detailed information about HB 1871's journey through the legislative process and can be found [here](#).

This article is for informational purposes only and does not constitute legal advice.

Contact Us

For guidance tailored to your organization, please contact Courtney Steelman, Harvey Tettlebaum, or your Husch Blackwell attorney.