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No. 8

### OPTOMETRY SCOPE EXPANSION HEARD

Bright and early Wednesday morning, when many Missourians were still rubbing sleepy-seeds out of their eyes, the House Committee on Professional Registration heard [HB 2897](#). This horrifying bill would allow optometrists to perform eye surgery and deliver injectables. The hearing underscored familiar faulty themes from the sponsor and proponents. It is hard to overcome claims from optometrists that they are sufficiently trained for “easy peasy” laser eye procedures, and that rural access to ophthalmologists is inadequate. It was also boldly asserted that ophthalmologists’ refusal to compromise reflects poorly on physicians. The scariest part is that many committee members are choosing to view the issue through a jaded lens, with the clarity of pea soup. Despite these hurdles, our witnesses delivered a strong, disciplined response. There’s nothing “easy peasy” about surgery! They systematically rebutted each argument and handled committee questions with authority and skill. They were also able to refocus the discussion on rural access realities and the surgical training required to protect patient safety. Overall, the hearing went better than last year’s. Optometry repeated their same old talking points while our witnesses brought new facts, clarity, and substantive discussion for the committee. We think this bill will eventually move out of committee. We’ll have to watch this one for the remainder of the session.

### ASSAULT ON HEALTHCARE WORKERS

One of the first bills to help in our efforts to address workplace violence was heard in the House Health Committee this week. [House Bill 2072](#) increases the punishment for the crime of knowingly causing physical pain to a healthcare worker. Not a single paid lobbyist testified in opposition to this bill. This is off to a good start, and it should get to the floor before Spring Break.

### ANESTHESIA INSURANCE COVERAGE

Earlier today, the House Health Committee heard [HB 1945](#), which makes changes to three provisions relating to healthcare. We really like the section that addressed anesthesia coverage. It’s a shame that legislation is required to make sure insurers cover anesthesia services, but here we are. It wasn’t too long ago that insurers tried to advance internal policies to limit coverage. We know the extent to which they will protect their profits. This bill protects both physicians and patients by prohibiting health carriers from imposing time limits or excluding anesthesia time when paying for anesthesia services during medical or surgical procedures. It prevents insurers from using payment policies that could undermine clinical judgment or compromise access to safe, physician-directed care. We have seen this language pop up in a Senate amendment already this year, so there’s a good chance both chambers will paddle in the same direction on this issue. We’ll keep you posted.

## MEDICINE AND SURGERY

This was the last week for legislators to introduce bills, so there's always a bunch of legislation introduced before the deadline. We usually refer to it as "bad idea Thursday". There were some good ideas filed this year. In particular, two bills were introduced that will codify the practice of medicine ([SB 1672](#)) and the definition of surgery ([HB 3484](#)) in statute. We welcome the discussion these bills will bring and are happy to add them to our defensive strategy to protect patients from the erosion of physician-led, team-based care.

## PHYSICIANS FILE FOR OFFICE

Filing for the 2026 election cycle began this week, and it's clear that public service runs in the bones of physicians! We are thrilled to report we have several physicians vying to serve in the Missouri legislature. Here's a spotlight on our physician candidates:

- **Lisa Thomas, MD**, is a former member of the Missouri House of Representatives, where she served from 2021–2025 representing the 123rd and 124th House Districts. Dr. Thomas is planning to run for Senate in the 6th district (Lake of the Ozarks and Jefferson City).
- **Ellen Nichols, MD**, is a board-certified neurosurgeon with more than 30 years of clinical experience. Dr. Nichols has formed a campaign committee to run for Senate District 32 (Joplin).
- **Sam Alexander, MD**, is a board-certified emergency physician with over 30 years of experience in frontline emergency care. He serves as a senior partner with Emergency Physicians of Springfield, affiliated with CoxHealth. He is planning to run for Senate District 28 (Bolivar, Sedalia, and Nevada).
- **Jon Patterson, MD**, currently serves as Speaker of the Missouri House of Representatives - the only physician to ever hold that position. Speaker Patterson is planning to run for Senate District 8 (Blue Springs and Lee's Summit).
- **George Hruza, MD**, currently serves as state representative for the 89<sup>th</sup> district. He will be running for his second term. Dr. Hruza currently serves on both the Health and Professional Registration Committees in the House.

Active engagement in Missouri's political process remains essential to re-establishing a physician-led healthcare environment, especially as decisions in Jefferson City continue to shape scope of practice, reimbursement, regulatory oversight, liability standards, public health and the long-term viability of independent medical practice. It is encouraging to see physician-candidates - who understand the pressures of practicing medicine - seeking state office and ensuring that state health policy remains grounded in patient safety, quality, and access.