



Advancing Oral Health Policy – Working with Legislators

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The Missouri Coalition for Oral Health is a non-profit **advocacy** agency - a statewide network of **advocates** working to improve Missouri's oral health through system change

Mission - To improve oral health with all Missourians by advocating for sound public policy

Vision – Oral Health for all Missourians

What this means: You are not alone; this is what we do!

MCOH Policy Goals

- Protection and expansion of public water system fluoridation
- Implementation of a statewide public awareness campaign about the importance of oral health to overall health
- Strengthening provider networks and expansion of service delivery of dental care for high-risk, vulnerable, MO HealthNet and uninsured populations, including people with disabilities and special health care needs
- Incorporation of oral health care in school-based health care
- Incorporation of oral health in the patient-centered medical home
- Reduction of tobacco use and vaping to improve Missouri oral health
- Expand access to comprehensive dental care for all Missouri veterans.
- Expand access to dental sealants for children without routine dental care
- Expand coverage of and access to silver diamine fluoride for all Missourians
- Inclusion of a comprehensive dental benefit in MO HealthNet
- Inclusion of a comprehensive dental benefit in Medicare

Advocacy: What and Why?

- Advocacy is raising awareness about an issue that is important to you.
- Speaking with state legislators, city council officials, county commissioners, and other elected or appointed government representatives demonstrates that oral health matters to both you and Missourians.
- Advocacy may involve making a direct request, such as urging the passage of legislation, securing funding for a project or program, or altering regulations.
- It is essential for decision-makers to recognize that oral health matters both to Missourians and to you personally.
- Without your input, decision-makers may overlook oral health.



Your representative is open to hearing what you have to say.

Elected officials appreciate hearing from people in their district, as well as those who are engaged in civic matters.

As a citizen, your individual voice may be even more influential than that of lobbyists or professional advocates.

Decision-makers recognize that their roles within government, whether elected or appointed, are dedicated to advancing the public interest.

Build your legislative contact for long-term benefits—connecting now can pay off in the future.

Laying the Groundwork

Learn about current bills and initiatives that will impact you and your community.

MCOH has provided testimony during committee hearings to indicate support or opposition.

Partner Lobby days have been held to raise similar support or opposition.

Learn who your legislators are, they are in your community!

The House and Senate websites contain information on bills, committees, and legislators. Advance research on these items can maximize your time in the Capitol.



[Missouri House of Representatives](#)



[Missouri Senate](#)

Talking with Legislators

Introduction: Introduce yourself as a constituent of their community and MCOH member.

Etiquette: Refer to legislators as Senator or Representative

Reason: Legislators expect to be asked to do something

Expect the unexpected: Interruptions and redirection

Conversation: Legislators may talk with you about other issues they find significant.

- If you wish to engage with them on issues not related to Coalition priorities, try to make it clear that you are speaking as an individual at that point

Legislative Communication

If you're unable to speak directly with the legislator, connecting with their Legislative Assistant, staff members, or interns can be equally valuable.

Staff members ensure that your concern is appropriately acknowledged and documented.

If you can't answer a question, that's ok!
Mark it on the Feedback survey so that information.

Build personal connections, stay polite,
and show appreciation for their time.



Writing to Legislators

Letters can be distinctive and tend to leave a memorable impact. A handwritten note is especially noticeable, but it's important to make sure it is clear and easy to read.

Be clear and to the point

If you get a response, please let us know at info@oralhealthmissouri.org, especially if there is follow-up that needs to happen.

Most communication now happens by email, which can still be useful.

2026 Legislative Priorities

MCOH supports HB 1847 (Rep. John Hewkin) and SB 988 (Sen. Ben Brown) – **Establishes the Dentist and Dental Hygienist Compact**

These bills allow Missouri to participate in an interstate dental compact. Passage of HB 1847 and SB 988 will lead to increased access to care through removing barriers to care provision by dental professionals from other states. Access to dental care is impacted by a limited number of providers throughout Missouri, but most acutely felt in rural areas of the state. Passage of these bills will help to increase access to oral health care, an essential health care need.

MCOH opposes SB 1548 (Sen. Mary Elizabeth Coleman) – **Creates Provisions Relating to the Discharge of Fluoride into Water**

This bill would eliminate the use of fluoride in public drinking water and make it unlawful for a public water supply district or district water system to discharge fluoride into water for human consumption.

Have a Schedule, but be Flexible

Please consider setting appointments with your Senator and Representative

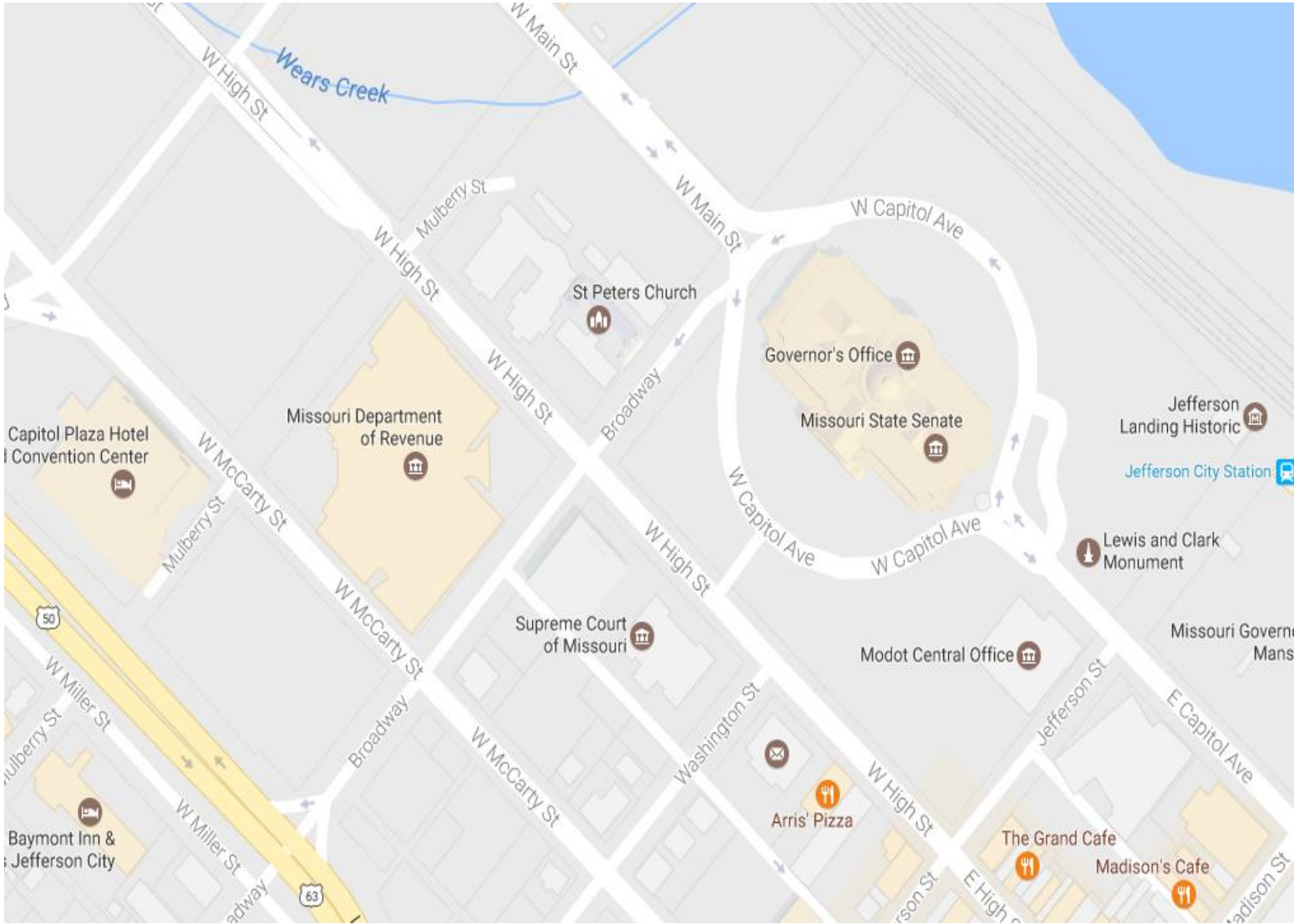
Even with an appointment, you may miss your Senator or Representative

- Connect with the LA or staffer/intern

- If you find the office locked or unattended – come back later

The LA may pull the legislator off the floor to speak with you or take you to a committee room

Visit other legislators - If you have time, it is acceptable to go into another legislator's office, introduce yourself and ask to speak with the Senator or Representative



Parking

Parking can be challenging near the Capitol

Metered parking on nearby streets

- Read signs closely
- Free parking
- Metered parking is only 1 hour
- Parking places you cannot use
- Police are vigilant & reliably ticket

Walking from the hotel may be the best option

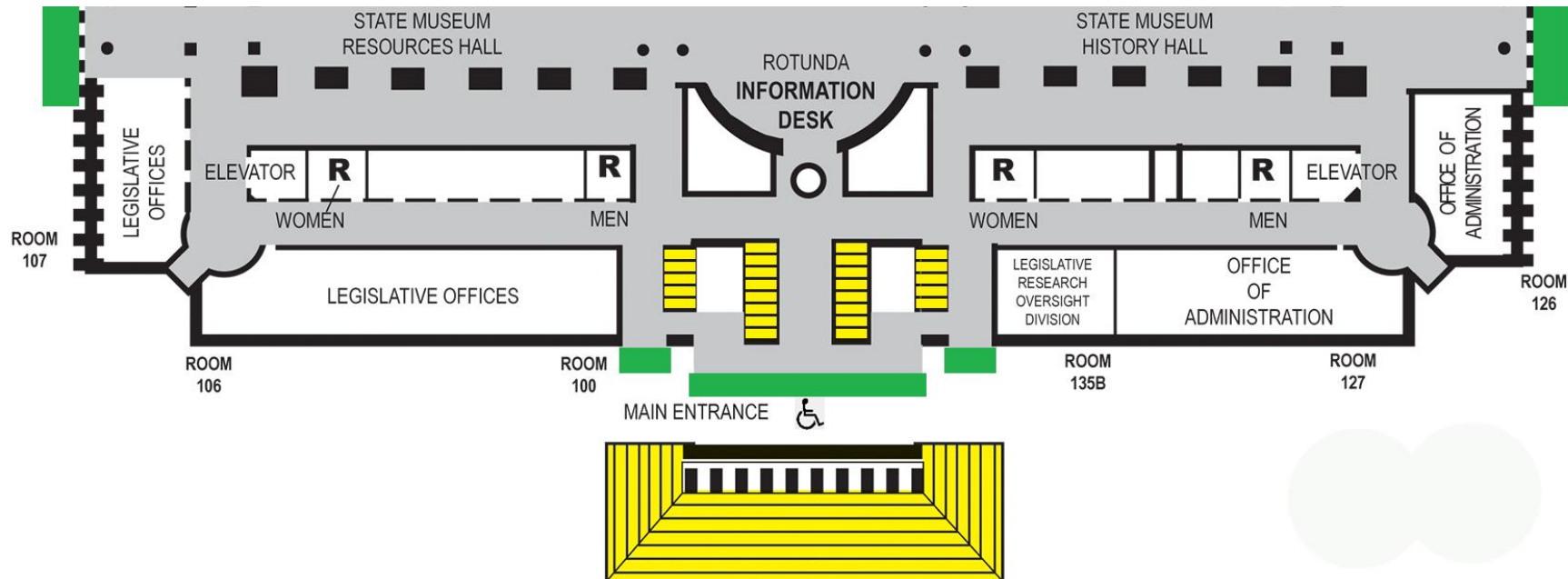
Logistics

Enter the Capitol building through doors under stairs on south side – facing High St and the Supreme Court Building – opposite MO River side – watch for signs

You will go through security - Similar to airport security

Once through security you can find elevators near the ends of each hallway to your right and left – elevator straight ahead on the other side of building

There is a Missouri State Museum tour desk straight ahead from security. They have maps that may be helpful, and legislator lists with room numbers.



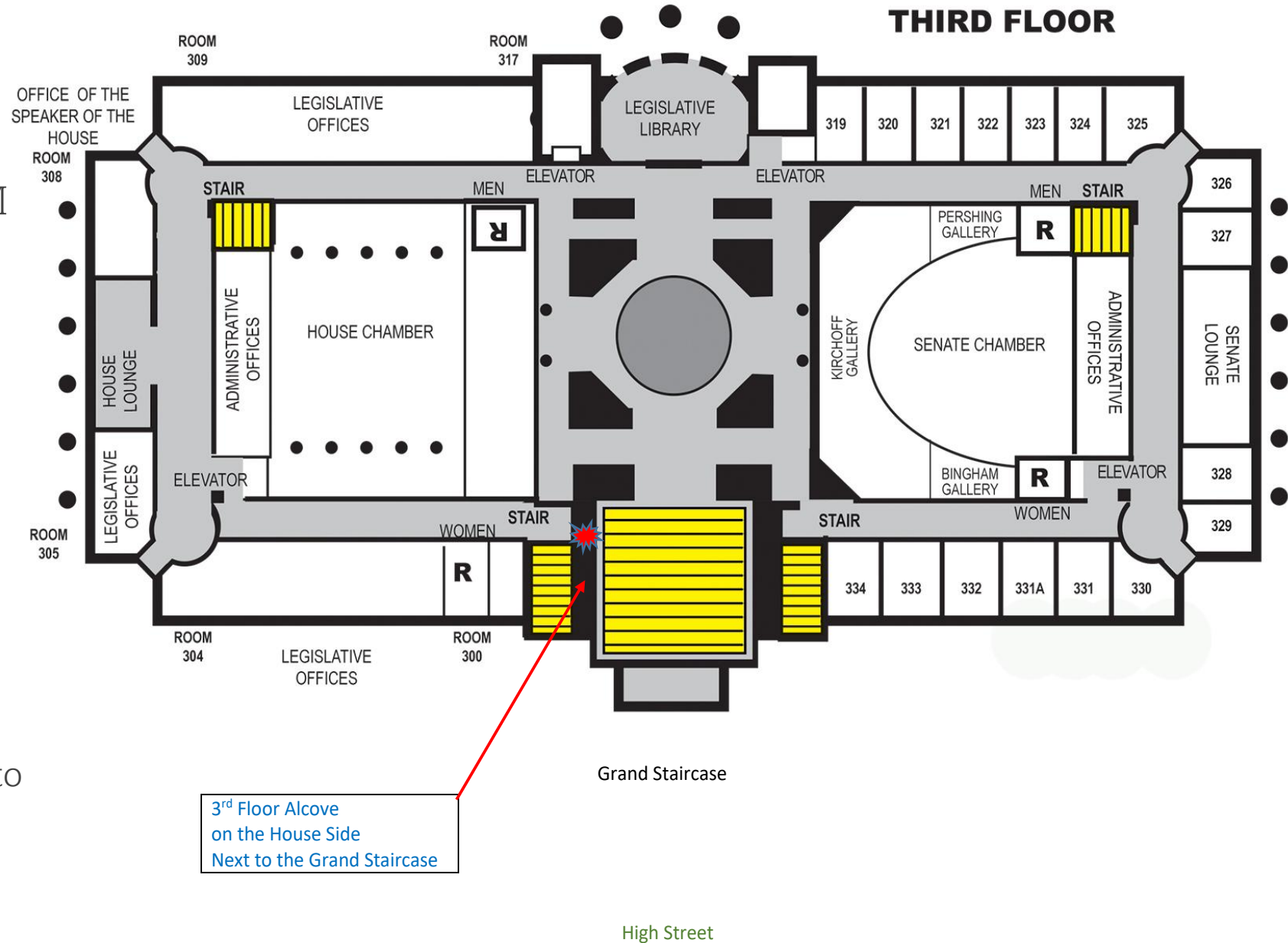
Jessica will be in the rotunda area (Senate Alcove) at 8 AM & will be there until 9:45 to answer questions and provide guidance. Legislature will usually go into session at 10 AM – consider leaving by then – the conference starts at 10:30 AM

Materials will be available, but also sent to you ahead of time –

2026 Legislative Priorities

MCOH Overview

Legislative Feedback Forms - We will send out a link to an online version. Include any questions you were unable to address



Follow Through

A personal thank-you note makes a great impression

When you get home, write a thank-you note for each Legislator and/or LA you spoke with

You can find addresses on the House and Senate websites

If you have questions or need assistance, let us know at info@oralhealthmissouri.org

The Honorable Senator's First and Last Names

The State Senate Rm. Room Number

Jefferson City, MO 65101

The Honorable Representative's First and Last Names

Missouri House of Representatives Rm. Room Number

Jefferson City MO 65101

Beyond Lobby Day

Meet with legislators in-district (your community)

Each legislator has district offices when not in Jefferson City; some of the most impactful conversations come from these interactions

Attend your local events such as town hall meetings to connect with local officials

Remember your legislators:

Follow social media accounts

Invite them to local events in-district

Discussion and Share Experience

Your voice can make a difference, and we need to work together

Ask Questions! There are no bad questions

Anxiety about something new is par for the course – expect it

Connect with attendees have a lot of experience and share your experience

info@oralhealthmissouri.org

Thank you for all you do for Missouri oral health!



www.oralhealthmissouri.org

