

Last minute action in the Missouri legislature

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JEFFERSON CITY — **Friday** is the final regularly scheduled day of lawmaking for the Missouri General Assembly. These last few hours make for a hectic scene as legislation nears and sometimes passes the finish line in the last minutes of the session.

The state's \$28 billion budget was passed on time last week, and lawmakers devoted the final five days of the 2018 session to sending numerous bills to the desk of Gov. Eric Greitens.



The assembly is controlled by super-majorities of Republicans, and bills passed in the final stretch to the dismay of the minority party can lead to partisan sniping back and forth between Democrats and the GOP, as well as among the caucuses.

On the heels of cutting taxes for individual Missourians, lawmakers agreed to cut income taxes for corporations from 6.25 percent to 4 percent, starting in 2020. The bill also limits how businesses are allowed to calculate and report income for tax purposes in an attempt to offset the tax cut's impact on state revenue.

Republican House Budget Chairman Scott Fitzpatrick said he supported the compromise between the House and the Senate and said he was more confident in the bill's impact on revenue. A previous, inaccurate fiscal analysis on a Senate bill to do so angered the House, which made changes and returned the bill.

Democrats vocally worried that the bill would lead to future budget cuts and had advocated for a smaller tax cut. A fiscal analysis produced Friday estimates a range between \$9.7 million in increased collections and \$8.8 million in decreased revenue in fiscal 2021.

A response to Anthem's emergency room policies was also green-lit by lawmakers in the name of lowering exposure for Missourians who face hefty bills after trips to the ER.

The bill, sponsored by GOP Sen. Paul Wieland, passed with broad bipartisan support. Anthem's policy, which stated that the insurance provider would deny claims for ER visits that the company deemed non-emergency ailments, also had been criticized as potentially illegal by federal lawmakers.

"The problem with the policy Anthem announced last year is that very often, the average consumer truly cannot tell the difference between a heart attack and a more benign condition," said Jen Bersdale of Missouri Health Care for All in a statement applauding the bill. "By requiring consumers to self-diagnose or face huge bills, we create a very real risk that a cost-conscious consumer will fail to seek care for a life-threatening emergency."