



MISSOURI HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
**WITNESS APPEARANCE FORM**

BILL NUMBER: <b>HB 1787</b>		DATE: <b>3/3/2026</b>	
COMMITTEE: <b>Elections</b>			
<b>TESTIFYING:</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> IN SUPPORT OF <input type="checkbox"/> IN OPPOSITION TO <input type="checkbox"/> FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES			
<b>WITNESS NAME</b>			
<b>BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:</b>			
WITNESS NAME: <b>ARNIE C. A.C. "HONEST ABE" DIENOFF</b>		PHONE NUMBER: <b>314-440-9000</b>	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: <b>STATE PUBLIC ADVOCACY</b>		TITLE: <b>STATE PUBLIC ADVOCATE</b>	
ADDRESS: <b>PO BOX 1535</b>			
CITY: <b>O'FALLON</b>		STATE: <b>MO</b>	ZIP: <b>63366</b>
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: <b>3/3/2026 12:00 AM</b>	
<b>THE INFORMATION ON THIS FORM IS PUBLIC RECORD UNDER CHAPTER 610, RSMo.</b>			



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<b>WITNESS NAME</b>			
<b>BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:</b>			
WITNESS NAME: <b>BYRON KEELIN</b>		PHONE NUMBER: <b>314-402-0655</b>	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: <b>FREEDOM PRINCIPLE</b>		TITLE: <b>PRESIDENT</b>	
ADDRESS: <b>PO BOX 2</b>			
CITY: <b>BALLWIN</b>		STATE: <b>MO</b>	ZIP: <b>63022</b>
EMAIL: <b>freedomprinciplemo@protonmail.com</b>	ATTENDANCE: <b>Written</b>	SUBMIT DATE: <b>3/3/2026 6:10 AM</b>	

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We support HB 1787 because setting school holidays on general election days will keep our children safe and secure by reducing outside foot traffic in school buildings. With schools closed on these days, we can prevent the potential safety risks posed by large numbers of voters entering school facilities. Additionally, this bill will help ensure teachers and staff are not put in the position of taking time away from teaching or other duties to campaign for or against ballot issues during school hours. This common-sense measure protects our kids and keeps educational staff focused on their primary mission.



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<b>WITNESS NAME</b>			
<b>BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:</b>			
WITNESS NAME: <b>DENISE LIEBERMAN</b>		PHONE NUMBER: <b>314-780-1833</b>	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: <b>MISSOURI VOTER PROTECTION COALITION</b>		TITLE: <b>DIRECTOR &amp; GENERAL COUNSEL</b>	
ADDRESS: <b>6047 WATERMAN BLVD.</b>			
CITY: <b>SAINT LOUIS</b>		STATE: <b>MO</b>	ZIP: <b>63112</b>
EMAIL: <b>denise@movpc.org</b>	ATTENDANCE: <b>Written</b>	SUBMIT DATE: <b>3/2/2026 8:34 PM</b>	
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The Missouri Voter Protection Coalition (MOVPC) submits this testimony in Support of HB 1787, which would create a school holiday in Missouri school districts and charter schools on municipal and general elections.

Public schools have served as election day voting sites for decades. Public schools are community-grounded institutions. They connect neighborhoods, families and communities. They tend to be accessible to individuals with disabilities and have parking. And having schools as polling sites allow students to witness democracy in action in real time.

Yet, in the wake of heightened safety and security concerns, from the growing spate of school mass shootings, to traffic congestion and traffic risks to students, to instructional disruptions, to large numbers of unsupervised community members in buildings with children, many school district administrators have struggled with how to continue to be strong community partners while prioritizing student safety, privacy, and student instruction.

For this reason, many districts have moved to measures like staff-only development days on election days, or restricting voting areas to one part of the building that can be separated from instructional areas. Across the nation, states and local school districts follow a patchwork of policies on whether public schools are open or closed on Election Day, and on what terms.

HB1787 would address the increased safety and security concerns of using schools as poll sites, without needing to sacrifice the civic engagement lessons that elections provide for students. In fact, it could help students to have greater hands-on engagement with elections. Students could help prepare the space for voting day, and by allowing students a day off, more students could participate as youth poll workers, as Missouri law provides in Mo. Rev. Stat. § 115.104. It would also help ensure that school teachers, staff and administrators are able to be able to vote themselves, modeling positive civic engagement for their students.

**Sincerely,**

**Denise Lieberman, Director & General Counsel  
MISSOURI VOTER PROTECTION COALITION/MOVPC ACTION  
6047 Waterman Blvd., St. Louis, MO 63112  
denise@movpc.org; (314) 780-1833  
www.movpc.org**



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<b>WITNESS NAME</b>			
<b>INDIVIDUAL:</b>			
WITNESS NAME: <b>PRECIOUS JONES</b>		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: <b>Written</b>	SUBMIT DATE: <b>3/3/2026 6:03 AM</b>	
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I agree and am in full support of this bill.



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<b>WITNESS NAME</b>		
<b>INDIVIDUAL:</b>		
WITNESS NAME: <b>RICHARD WISKUS</b>		PHONE NUMBER:
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:
ADDRESS:		
CITY:		STATE:                  ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: <b>Written</b>	SUBMIT DATE: <b>3/1/2026 11:11 PM</b>
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**Testimony in Support of Missouri HB 1787 – Gragg – School Closures on Election Days\*\***

As an educator, I support HB 1787 because it addresses a practical and longstanding concern in our schools: the challenge of maintaining a secure learning environment on days when our buildings also function as public polling places. When hundreds of community members enter and exit throughout the day, it becomes significantly harder to ensure controlled access, monitor visitors, and maintain the level of safety our students deserve.

Closing schools on election days would also protect instructional time. Teachers and students currently face disruptions from parking congestion, noise, and restricted access to shared spaces. A dedicated closure allows elections to proceed smoothly while preserving the continuity and quality of classroom learning.

HB 1787 offers a balanced solution that respects both civic participation and the safety of Missouri’s children. It provides clarity for districts, reduces risk, and ensures that our schools remain secure, focused environments for teaching and learning.



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<b>WITNESS NAME</b>		
<b>INDIVIDUAL:</b>		
WITNESS NAME: <b>NANCY COPENHAVER</b>		PHONE NUMBER:
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:
ADDRESS:		
CITY:		STATE:      ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: <b>Written</b>	SUBMIT DATE: <b>3/3/2026 8:15 PM</b>
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There are many difficulties in adjusting the calendar for hundreds of school districts to facilitate closing school buildings for use for elections. Schools plan their calendars two years in advance in many instances. Adding two days of "vacation" means that other vacation days will be affected or class time is reduced. Childcare becomes a problem. The state should not interfere anymore than it already has in restricting when schools can start and end and how they structure their calendars.



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<b>WITNESS NAME</b>			
<b>INDIVIDUAL:</b>			
WITNESS NAME: <b>SARAH BERRY</b>		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: <b>Written</b>	SUBMIT DATE: <b>3/2/2026 11:58 AM</b>	
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HB 1787 requires all school districts and charter schools, beginning in the 2026–27 school year, to designate both general municipal election day and general election day as school holidays on which school is not in session.

While promoting civic participation is a legitimate state interest, HB 1787 raises structural, local-control, and constitutional concerns.

First, the bill imposes a statewide closure mandate regardless of whether a school is used as a polling place. This overrides local school board discretion in calendar-setting, an authority historically vested in local districts under Missouri’s constitutional framework for public education governance.^1 Mandating closure without regard to local necessity may be challenged as arbitrary where no safety or operational justification exists.

Second, forcing closure while maintaining minimum instructional-hour requirements effectively compels districts to restructure calendars or extend school time elsewhere.

When combined with financial penalties for noncompliance under §171.031(4), the bill increases regulatory rigidity without additional funding, raising substantive due process concerns if penalties are imposed absent a rational relationship to operational realities.^2

Third, conditioning state funding on calendar compliance—even where districts meet statutory instructional-hour requirements—may invite constitutional scrutiny under Missouri’s education clause if enforcement results in disproportionate fiscal punishment unrelated to educational adequacy.^3

Finally, to the extent the policy is premised on civic engagement, the bill assumes school closure meaningfully increases voter participation. Courts have recognized that state action must bear a rational relationship to its asserted objective.^4 A blanket closure requirement may fail that test in districts where schools are not polling sites and no access barrier exists.

Legislative Notice: The General Assembly is placed on notice that HB 1787’s mandatory statewide school closure requirement tied to funding penalties, irrespective of local operational necessity or polling-site status, creates foreseeable local-control and substantive due process challenges if enforcement is imposed absent a demonstrated rational nexus to school safety or voter access.

Footnotes

**Mo. Const. art. IX, § 1(a) (General Assembly shall establish and maintain free public schools; local districts traditionally exercise calendar authority within statutory framework).**

**U.S. Const. amend. XIV; *Nebbia v. New York*, 291 U.S. 502 (1934) (economic and regulatory measures must bear a real and substantial relation to a legitimate governmental purpose).**

**Mo. Const. art. IX, § 1(a); see *Committee for Educational Equality v. State*, 878 S.W.2d 446 (Mo. banc 1994) (education clause framework and funding considerations).**

***FCC v. Beach Communications, Inc.*, 508 U.S. 307 (1993) (rational basis review requires legislation to be rationally related to a legitimate governmental purpose).**



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<b>INDIVIDUAL:</b>			
WITNESS NAME: <b>SUSAN GIBSON</b>		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: <b>Written</b>		SUBMIT DATE: <b>3/1/2026 7:59 PM</b>

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**I would support this bill only if it required schools to serve as polling places. Otherwise, it undermines local control.**