Prompt Inquiry
a project of the Ishmael Policy Institute

WORKING PAPER NO. 2026-04 LEGACY POLITICS AND ELECTIONS

The Candidate Factory

How Missouri Republicans lost a supermajority in both chambers in 2026, on the unofficial count, without losing either majority, and what the record says about a party that, on the prompter's thesis, created its own gridlock to serve unreliable median-voter candidates.

RESEARCH QUESTION

How much of the thesis that Missouri's Republican supermajority created its own gridlock does the public record support?

Prompted and verified by **Patrick Ishmael**, Founding Prompter, for Prompt Inquiry, a project of the Ishmael Policy Institute. Drafted with AI assistance (Claude and Mia) under the prompter's direction.

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ABOUT THIS PAPER

Research brief

RESEARCH QUESTION

How much of the thesis that Missouri's Republican supermajority created its own gridlock does the public record support?

METHOD AND SOURCES

The study's "Method, limits and sources" section describes the data; all 2026 election figures are unofficial. Sources are listed in full, with links where available, at the end of the study.

STARTING VIEW

The prompter's view was that the Missouri Republican Party's value proposition is essentially non-existent: to the extent it exists, it is a means of producing candidates, with term limits driving the churn. (From the study's "How this started" note.)

OPENING PROMPT

Not saved as a prompt at the time. The study's own account of how it started gives the question: "The question here is how much of that the public record supports."

AI TOOLS AND VERIFICATION

Primary agents. Claude (Claude by Anthropic): research, analysis, figures and drafting; **Mia** (Muse by Meta): research brief, coordination and checks.

Contributing agents. None on record for this study.

Verification: the prompter is responsible for verifying the evidence this study rests on. Its sources and data are published so any reader can check the findings.

UNOFFICIAL RESULTS

Every 2026 election figure on this study is unofficial. They are precinct-complete results from the Missouri Secretary of State, which labels them "Unofficial Results," last checked at 2:32 a.m. on 4 November 2026. They are not certified. A recount in the closest races could move a seat, though it could not restore either supermajority.

HOW THIS STARTED

This began as a thesis. The prompter's view is that the Missouri Republican Party's value proposition is essentially non-existent: to the extent it exists, it is a means of producing candidates. Term limits drive the churn, and the only people left behind are lobbyists and legislative staff. A supermajority that did not act like a supermajority then lost both supermajorities in 2026 without losing either majority.

The question here is how much of that the public record supports. Each part of the thesis was tested separately against sourced data, and where the record disagrees with the first draft of the thesis, the page follows the record. Disclosure: the prompter supported the curriculum-transparency bills discussed below and testified for HJR 110 and HB 1858.

HOW THIS STUDY WAS MADE

Patrick Ishmael prompted this study and verified it. Claude drafted it and ran the analysis under his direction, on a research package assembled by Mia, an AI agent, and it should be read as a working study rather than a finished argument. It uses only the sourced record in that package. Where a figure is missing or a claim is unproven, the page leaves it missing and says so.

THE STEELMAN

The argument at its strongest, before the evidence

Term limits make ambition the scarce organizing force in a legislature. A member has a fixed number of years in each chamber, and the only durable careers on offer are leadership posts and a run for higher office. A leadership that wants to keep a supermajority has little to offer its members except protection. So it shields the members who hold competitive seats from votes that would cost them at home, and it tolerates dissent that costs nothing because the outcome is already settled. On this view the gridlock is not a failure of leadership. It is the method: hold the seats and preserve the supermajority, because only a majority that large can enact substantive policy. The bargain is rational for everyone inside it. Whether it delivered what it was for is what the rest of this study tests.

Written by Claude. The evidence follows, and the closing thought returns to this argument with the record in hand.

What we found

The core of the thesis holds: legislative output collapsed while the supermajority was at its largest, and the churn machinery is real and term-limit driven. The parts about lobbyists and tenure do not hold as first stated, and the page says so where they come up.

28 policy bills, 2024
Down from 170 in 2014, the least productive session in about 30 years, then back up to 83 in 2026.

3.2% of 3,110 bills filed passed in 2026
A record number of filings. The passage rate has been about 2% to 3% every year since 2020.

0 full-bill vetoes, 2024–2026
No full-bill veto has been overridden since 2016; the fight moved to line items.

12 of 17 Senate seats, no incumbent on the 2026 ballot
Nine were term-limited. The highest open share in the series.

848 Legislative-branch lobbyists, 2025
Down from 956 in 2019. Registrations are flat to falling, not rising.

Feb 2026 Patterson's reversal
The lone Republican no on HJR 73 in 2025 voted for the permanent ban a year later.

HOW EACH PART OF THE THESIS HELD UP

THESIS ELEMENT	VERDICT	WHAT THE RECORD SHOWS
Output fell sharply while the supermajority was at its largest	Supported	Policy bills 170 (2014) to 28 (2024), while filings rose.
The fall is specific to a supermajority, not just the national environment	Mixed	Output fell while filings rose and survived earlier hostile national cycles; 2020, 2024 and bill-count definitions confound it.
Term limits drive churn and leadership turnover	Supported	Roughly a third of the House turns over per cycle; nearly every leadership exit was a term limit.
Average tenure is falling	Insufficient data	Only a 2025 snapshot exists. First-term share is built for 2016–2024 only.
Lobbyists are the permanent government (rising registrations, fees driving the agenda)	Mixed / insufficient	Registrations are flat to falling. Fees by client are not published in Missouri.
The revolving door is large	Insufficient data	Seven verified names, anecdotal, not a census.

THESIS ELEMENT	VERDICT	WHAT THE RECORD SHOWS
Transparency bills had teeth and died; letter-grade bills were toothless and persisted	Supported, with a correction	Transparency bills had teeth and died; letter grades were report-only for a decade, gained teeth only in 2026, and died too.
Cheap dissent in the House, expensive dissent in the Senate	Mechanism supported; record mixed	Patterson reversed himself in February 2026. Hough is the cleaner case.
Senate obstruction explains the collapse	Mixed	2024 is the obstruction floor; the 2025 PQ surge raised output.

1 · THE RESULT

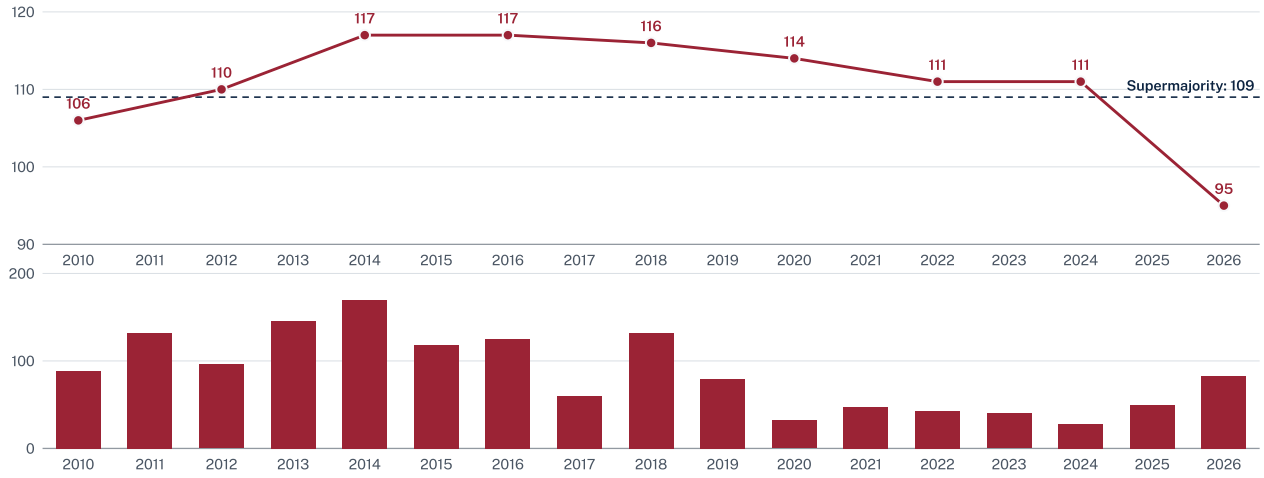
Both majorities kept, both supermajorities lost

On the unofficial count, Republicans hold the Missouri House **95–68** (a majority is 82, a supermajority 109) and the full Senate **22–12** (a majority is 18, a supermajority 23). Of the 17 Senate seats up this year, Republicans won 12 and Democrats 5. Republicans held both chambers at every election in the series, and a supermajority in both from 2012 through 2024.

FIGURE 1

Republican House seats and policy bills passed, 2010–2026

Top: Republican seats won at each general election (2014 is the filled-seat count, 117R–46D). Bottom: policy bills truly agreed and finally passed in each session year. 2026 seats are unofficial.



Reading it: the House ran at or above the 109-seat line from 2012 through 2024 (110 to 117) and the Senate held 24 or 25 of 34 against a line of 23. Output fell sharply from 2019 on (with a partial rebound in 2025 and 2026), well before the seat count moved. Seats are plotted at the election year and bills at the session year, so the two panels line up by calendar year, not by session.

Senate Republican seats after each election: 26 (2010), 24 (2012), 25 (2016), 24 (2018, 2020, 2022, 2024), 22 (2026, unofficial). House: 106 (2010), 110 (2012), 117 (2014), 117 (2016), 116, 114, 111, 111 and 95.

2 · OUTPUT

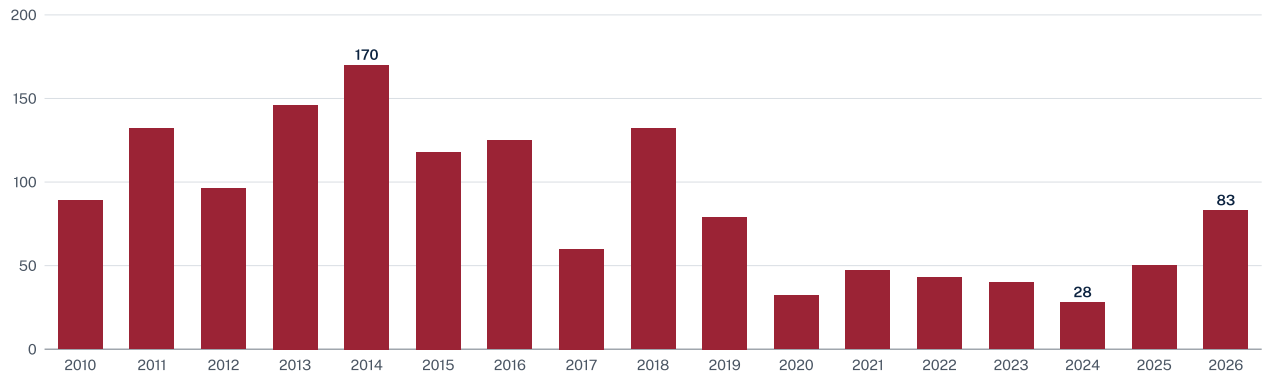
They filed more and passed less

The strongest numbers in the study are about throughput. "Policy bills" below means the count of policy bills and resolutions truly agreed to and finally passed (TAFP), the series Missouri's House publishes. It peaks inside this window at **170 in 2014**, falls to **28 in 2024**, the least productive session in about 30 years (by the count of the Missouri Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence; the 28 matches Empower Missouri and the Missouri Bar), and recovers to **83 in 2026**. In 2025 the legislature truly agreed to and finally passed **67 bills in total**, 16 of them appropriations bills; the policy series counts 50.

FIGURE 2

Missouri policy bills passed, by session year

Policy bills plus TAFP resolutions, as charted by the House. Hover or tap a bar.



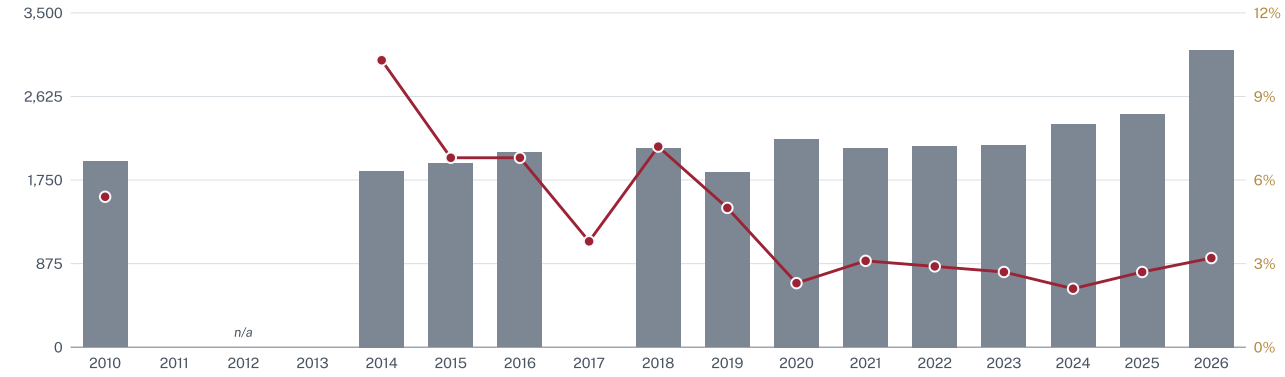
Definitions warning: this series includes joint and concurrent resolutions, so a bills-only count differs by 3 to 5 in several years. Reputable sources also disagree on the 2023 and 2026 totals by a few bills. These are reported counts, not a recount.

Over the same years the number of bills filed went up. The record is 3,110 filed in 2026 (2,048 in the House and 1,062 in the Senate), of which 100 passed, a passage rate of 3.2%. The rate has been about 2% to 3% in every year from 2020 on (2.1% to 3.2%), against a high of 10.3% in 2014.

FIGURE 3

Bills filed and share that passed

Bars: bills and measures filed (basis differs slightly by year; see the note). Line: passed (all TAFP bills including appropriations) as % of filed, where the source gives it.



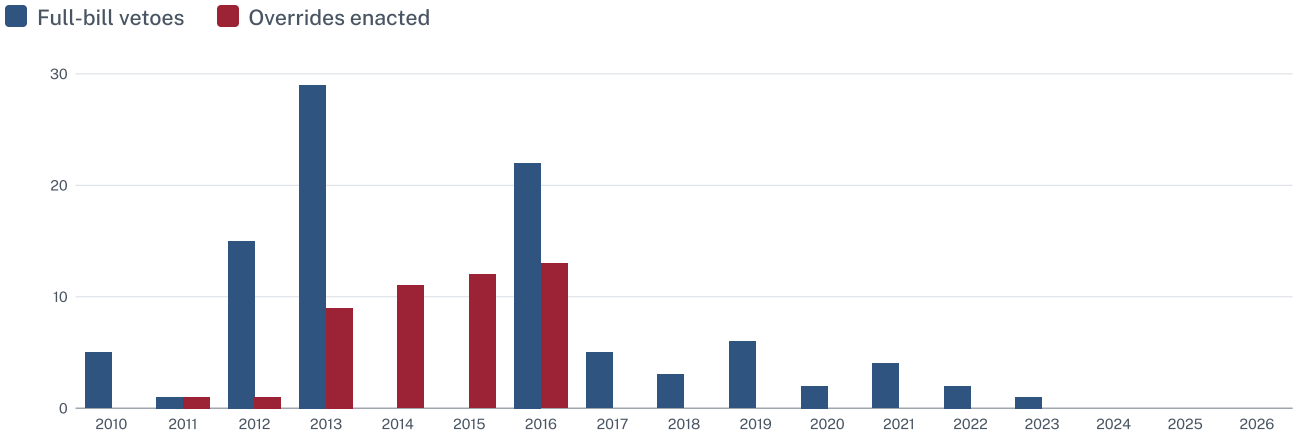
Filed totals are missing for 2011–2013 and left blank; 2017 is only reported as roughly 2,000 and is not plotted. Filing totals mix "bills only" and "bills plus resolutions" depending on the source, so compare years loosely. The 2026 Senate figure is 1,062; an earlier brief's figure of 975 could not be corroborated anywhere.

The veto record shows the same shift. Governor Nixon (a Democrat, through January 2017) was overridden 96 times across his tenure, counting bills and budget line items (Associated Press, via Southeast Missourian). Since 2017 full-bill vetoes have nearly disappeared (none in 2024, 2025 or 2026), and no full-bill veto has been overridden since 2016. The fight moved to line items: 201 were vetoed in 2023 and 208 in 2025, and the governor restricted $211 million of spending in 2025 and $441.3 million in 2026.

FIGURE 4

The veto cliff

Full-bill vetoes and overrides enacted. Gaps are years the sources do not give a figure.



Vetoes for 2010 and 2011 are minimum identified counts, and 2022 is "at least 2." Veto totals for 2014–2015 and override counts for 2018, 2019, 2021 and 2022 were not found. Special sessions were held in most years from 2017 to 2022 and again in 2025.

WHAT THIS DOES AND DOES NOT PROVE

It proves output collapsed while the supermajority was intact (111 Republican House seats and 24 Senate seats, 2022–2024) and while filings rose. It does not by itself prove the cause was internal Republican division. Senate filibuster paralysis in 2024, the pandemic in 2020 and omnibus bills (fewer bills, bigger bills) all confound a clean causal claim.

3 · CHURN

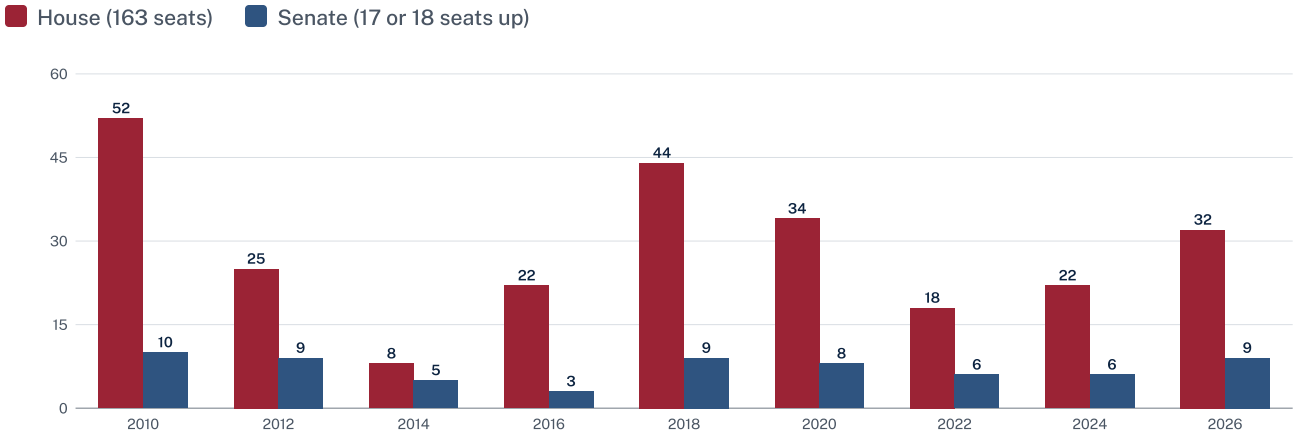
Term limits turn the House over on a schedule

The churn mechanism is real. In a typical cycle roughly a third of the House turns over, and the term-limited count echoes the entry classes of eight years earlier: big freshman classes term out together. In 2026, 32 House members and 9 of the 17 Senate seats up (52.9%) were term-limited.

FIGURE 5

Term-limited seats per election cycle

Members barred from running again, by chamber. Hover or tap.

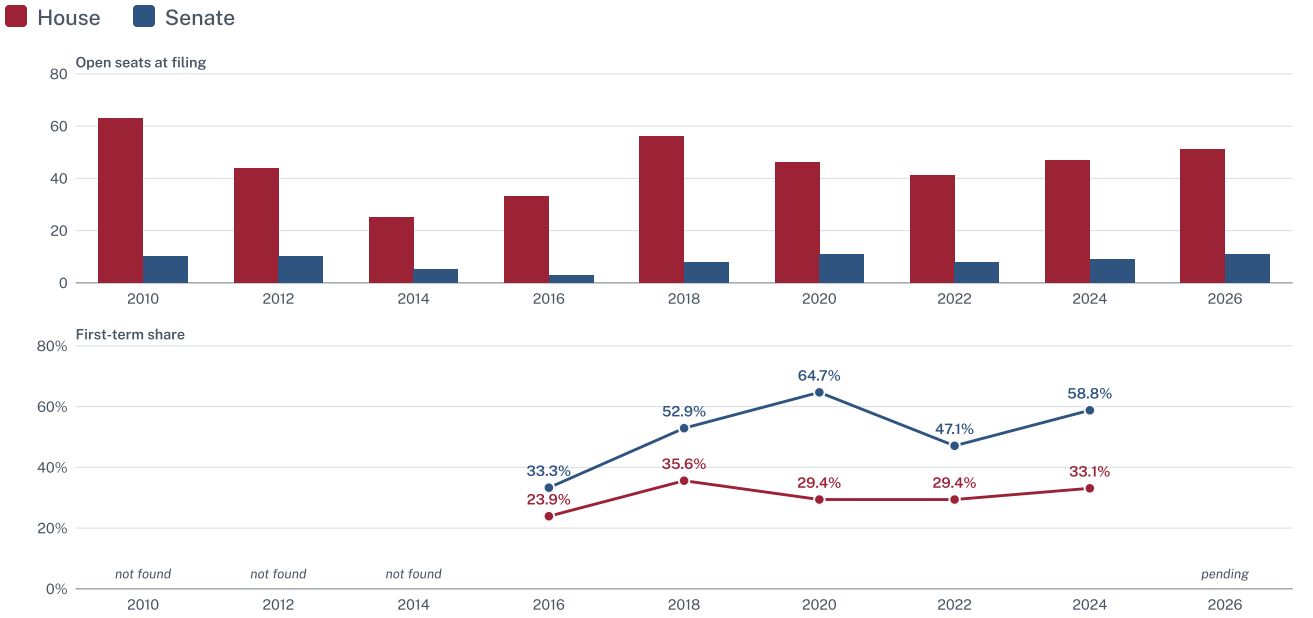


Source: Ballotpedia term-limits pages. The 2016 Senate cycle had 18 seats up, not 17, because of how odd districts fell.

FIGURE 6

Open seats, and new members as a share of the chamber

Top: open seats at filing. Bottom: first-term share, 2016–2024 only (earlier years were not found, so the line starts in 2016). Senate share is of seats up.



The House first-term share peaked at 35.6% in 2018 (58 new members) and was 33.1% in 2024. Because the 2026 election was just held, the first-term share for 2026 is pending; the floor is 54 open House seats on the general ballot, and in the Senate 12 of 17 seats (70.6%) had no incumbent on the November ballot, the highest in the series.

- **Incumbents rarely lose in November.** House general-election defeats ran 0 to 3 per cycle from 2016 to 2024, and no Senate incumbent lost a general election in any cycle from 2016 to 2024 (the last was in 2012). Open seats are mostly a term-limits story: in 2018, 40 of 56 House open seats were term-limited by the reason Ballotpedia gives for each open seat. Figure 5's 44 for 2018 counts members barred by term limits instead; the four-seat gap is most likely term-limited members that table lists as having filed for a different office.
- **Leadership is on the same conveyor belt.** The House has had 8 Speakers and the Senate 6 Presidents Pro Tem in 16 years. Every Speaker exit but two (Tilley's resignation in August 2012, KBIA, and Diehl's in May 2015) and every Pro Tem exit but one (Dempsey's in August 2015) was a term limit.
- **Average tenure: no trend line.** Only a 2025 snapshot could be built: 2.54 years in the House and 3.00 in the Senate. No per-session series exists in published sources, so there is no honest "tenure fell from X to Y" statement. The churn is documented; the average-tenure decline is not.

4 · EDUCATION

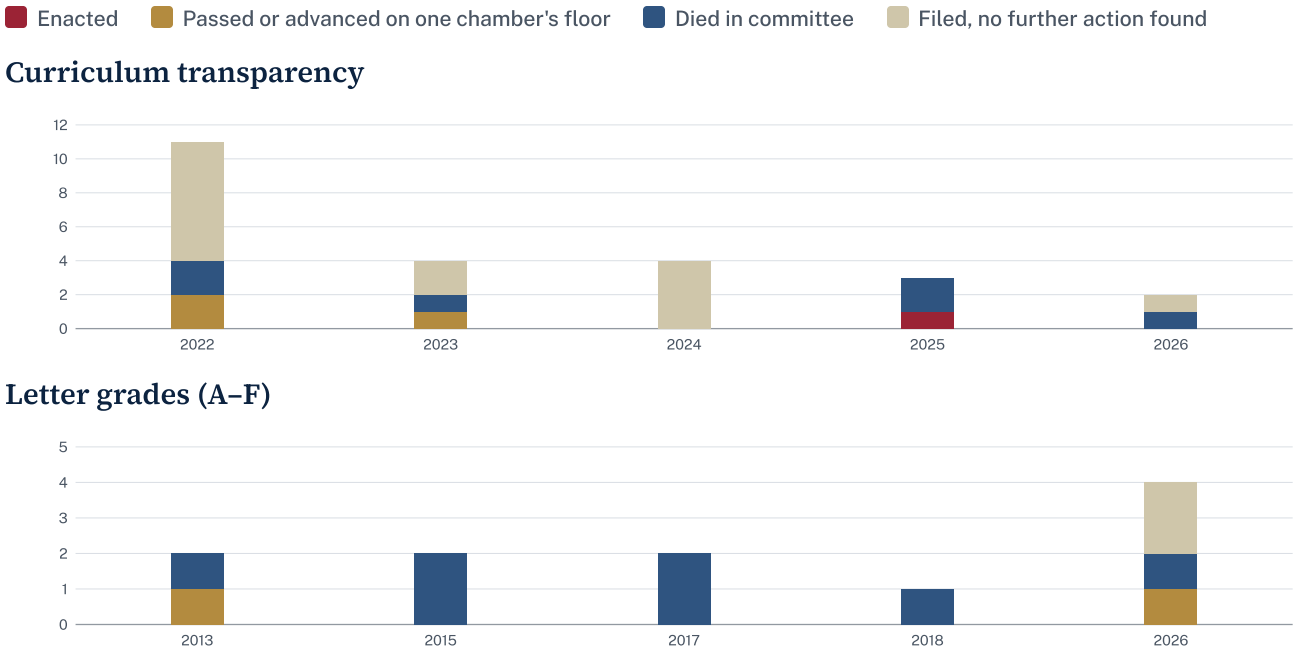
Two kinds of transparency, two different fates

The prompter's first hypothesis was that curriculum-transparency bills had teeth and died, while letter-grade bills were toothless and persisted. The record supports that, with one correction: the letter-grade bills were report-only for a decade, gained teeth only in 2026, and died too.

FIGURE 7

Bills filed by session, and how far each got

Counts of named bills found in the record. Gaps do not mean none were filed: the search found no curriculum-transparency bill before 2022, and no letter-grade bill from 2020 to 2025, which is a search result, not proof of absence.



HJR 110 (2022), a constitutional amendment covering both topics, is counted once, under transparency. The 2026 executive order on letter grades is not a bill and is not counted. "Filed, no further action found" includes bills whose later status the sources do not give.

The furthest any standalone transparency bill got was one chamber: HB 1858 in 2022 passed the House 85–59 and died in the Senate Fiscal Oversight Committee, chaired that year by Lincoln Hough (profiled in section 6). The Senate's combined SBs 4, 42 and 89 passed 21–12 in 2023 and died in the House. Letter grades got no further: HB 388 passed the House 128–22 in 2013, similar bills were filed through 2018 and then none until 2026, and HB 2710 passed the House 96–53 in 2026 and died in the Senate. **No bill on either topic ever reached a governor's desk as a standalone measure from 2010 to 2026.**

FIGURE 8

The teeth inversion

How much enforcement each measure carried, against what happened to it.

MEASURE	TOPIC	ENFORCEMENT	OUTCOME
HB 1858 (2022)	Curriculum transparency	Strong Civil action, state-aid withholding, portal and mandatory curriculum posting	Died Passed House 85–59; died in Senate Fiscal Oversight
SBs 4, 42 & 89 (2023)	Curriculum transparency	Report-only Portal plus parental rights and opt-out	Died Passed Senate 21–12; died in House
HB 744 (2025)	Curriculum transparency	Strong Civil actions and state-funding withholding	Died Died as a standalone bill; replaced by a substitute
SB 68 (2025)	Curriculum transparency	Report-only Policy adoption and safety notification; no portal, posting or penalty identified	Enacted Signed, as a rider in a school-safety omnibus
SB 344 (2013) through SB 643 (2018)	Letter grades	Report-only Publication only; some say the grade has no bearing on accreditation	Died Died in committee
HB 388 (2013)	Letter grades	Report-only Grading by deciles on APR points; separate report card	Died Passed House 128–22; Senate fate not found
HB 2710 (2026)	Letter grades	Strong Performance-based funding and a rating consequence	Died Passed House 96–53; died in Senate
Executive Order 26-01 (2026)	Letter grades	None No statutory teeth: executive order and State Board action	In effect Framework approved by the State Board 15 September 2026

Reading it: HB 1858 had a civil action, state-aid withholding, a state portal and mandatory website posting of curriculum. The only transparency measure that became law, SB 68 in 2025, rode in as a rider in a school-safety omnibus after the standalone bills HB 1287 and HB 744, combined in committee, died, with no portal, no required posting and no penalty identified in the sources consulted. That assessment rests on summaries, not the enrolled text, which has not yet been read. For letter grades, the bills were report-only for a decade; 2026 was the first time money and a rating consequence were attached, and that bill died too. A–F grades are instead being implemented under Executive Order 26-01 (Gov. Kehoe, 13 January 2026), not statute.

5 · LOBBYISTS

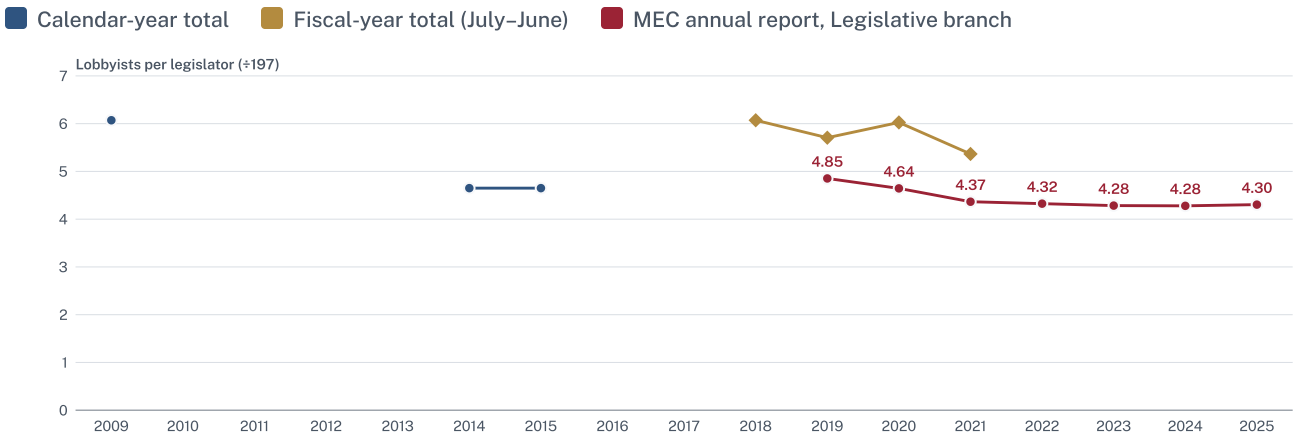
The lobbyist part of the thesis is not supported

If lobbyists and staff are what remain while legislators turn over, one would expect the lobbyist headcount to rise. It does not. Every actual count in the record sits between about 840 and 1,200 depending on the basis, and the Missouri Ethics Commission annual reports show the Legislative-branch headcount falling from 956 in 2019 to 848 in 2025. Missouri does not publish what clients pay lobbyists, so the money half of the claim cannot be tested at all. A handful of former legislators and staffers are verified by name as having become lobbyists (Steve Tilley, Tim Green, Jim Lembke, Corey Jackson, Tom Dempsey and Rocky Miller, among others), but that is a list of anecdotes, not a census. The record does not support this part of the thesis, and the rest of the page does not depend on it.

FIGURE 9

Registered lobbyists per legislator

Registered lobbyists divided by 197 legislators. Three different bases are shown separately and are not spliced into one trend.



The 2015 total (916) is identical to 2014's with very different type breakdowns and may be a carry-over error. Executive-branch headcounts overlap with Legislative and are not summed.

6 · TWO SENATE CASES

Cheap dissent, expensive dissent

The thesis offers a mechanism for conformity: dissent in the House is cheap because it blocks nothing in a 111-seat majority, and dissent gets expensive once someone is promoted to a chamber where one vote matters. The record supports the mechanism but not a simple portrait of either man.

Jon Patterson

One of three Republicans voting no on final passage of SB 49 in 2023 (108–50). The lone Republican House vote against HJR 73 in 2025 (final vote 103–51). Then, on **12 February 2026, he voted for the permanent ban** on puberty blockers and hormones for minors (102–40). No retrieved source records him explaining the switch.

Lincoln Hough (Springfield)

Senate Appropriations chair until he was removed in September 2025. Pushed K-12 funding $300 million above the governor's request in 2025. His 2026 amendment for $190 million failed 20–10. He gave $2,400 to Betsy Fogle, the Democrat who won his seat.

PATTERSON: THE REVERSAL BELONGS IN THE STORY

A one-dimensional "maverick" score misclassifies him. His 2023 no is "one of three" only on final passage; only two Republicans voted no on the April House-bill votes. His 2025 no on HJR 73 cost nothing in a 111-seat majority, and an earlier perfection vote was 94–50 with two Republican noes. Then in February 2026, with his Senate race ahead, he voted with his party. The study can say that dissent did not block his advancement and that advancement then produced conformity. It cannot say why he changed his vote. He lost Senate District 8 to Keri Ingle (D), **42,462 (55.244%) to 34,401 (44.756%) on the unofficial count**; the winners and rounded shares are confirmed by multiple outlets, though the exact counts could not be re-pulled from the Secretary of State's page. Amendment 3, the ballot measure that grew out of HJR 73, was rejected by voters on 3 November 2026, the same night. That postdates the legislative record and is kept separate from it.

HOUGH: THE CLEANEST EXPENSIVE-DISSENT CASE, WITH A MIXED RECORD

Hough says his removal as chair was retaliation for voting against the previous-question motions on HB 1 and HJR 3; Pro Tem O'Laughlin says it was rotation, and the timing (about 20 minutes after the special-session votes) supports the retaliation reading without proving motive. He also voted to fund voter-approved Medicaid expansion in 2021 (the account of how many Senate Republicans joined him varies between sources, so the page cites the vote and not the headcount). The "eleventh Democrat" label is only a reported nickname with no identified originator. His seat flipped on 3 November 2026: Fogle (D) 32,356 (57.98%) to Stinnett (R) 21,556 (38.63%), unofficial and partly verified for the same reason as District 8. Hough is term-limited out.

His record is mixed on party lines. As chair he also set Planned Parenthood reimbursements to $0 in the 2024 budget (later ruled unconstitutional) and sponsored the 2022 tax cut. He is a moderate on spending and education who broke with his party on procedure and on specific votes, not a Democrat in Republican clothing.

The education bills add one more detail. In 2022 Hough chaired the Senate Governmental Accountability and Fiscal Oversight Committee, which is where HB 1858 went after it cleared the House and Senate Education. The record shows no further action on it before the session ended (chair per the Senate's archived 2022 member page).

The two 2026 Senate flips together broke the supermajority: Patterson by losing his race, and Hough by term-limiting out and funding the Democrat who replaced him.

7 · OBSTRUCTION

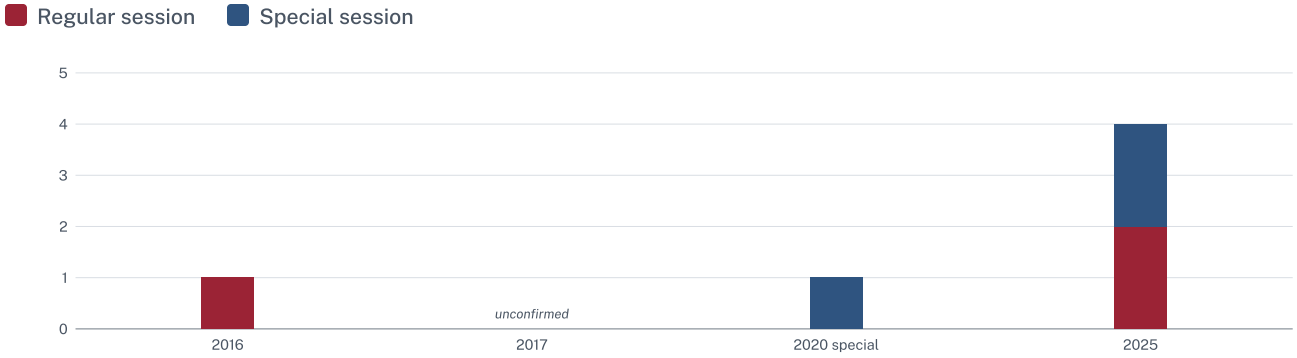
The Senate is the bottleneck, and 2024 was the floor

Both education topics run into the same wall, and so does most of the session's work: the Senate. The "previous question" (PQ) motion, the tool for ending a filibuster, was used about 15 times in 55 years through 2016 by one count. In 2025 it was used four times in about four months, and on February 3, 2026, the Senate voted 23–11 to raise the signatures needed to move it from 10 to 18 (Missouri Independent).

FIGURE 10

Previous Question motions — reported uses

Reported totals, not a Journal recount. Only sessions with a sourced figure are shown.

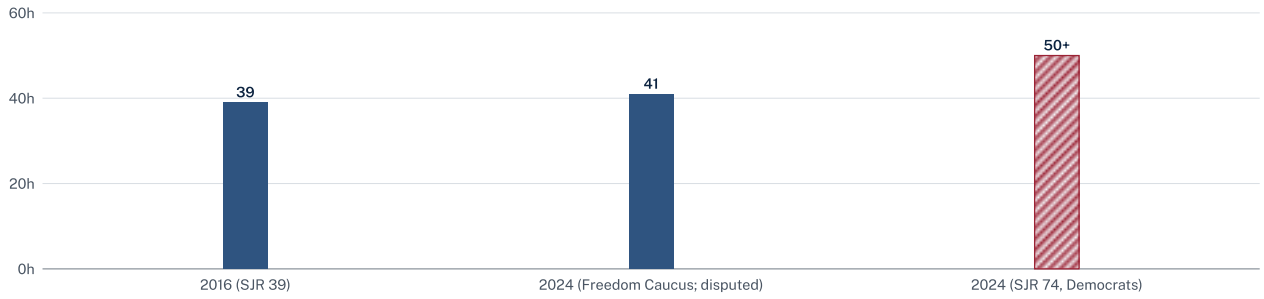


Reported totals, not a Journal recount. 2025 is four in total: two in the May regular session (HJR 73, HB 567) and two in September's second special session (HB 1 on the congressional map, HJR 3 on initiative petitions). Do not read it as 4 plus 2. 2017 is unconfirmed (a documented 2015 right-to-work PQ may be the source of confusion); the 2020 special-session figure rests on a single secondary source; 2026 is not found rather than zero.

FIGURE 11

Longest filibusters

Wall-clock time on the floor, not continuous speech.



Definition warning: durations include procedural motions, quorum calls and recesses, and sources vary (39, 39.5 or 40 hours for 2016). The 41 hours attributed to the Freedom Caucus in 2024 is disputed. No filibuster count per session is given because no agreed definition exists, and the bars are not ranked to the hour.

2024, not 2025, is the obstruction floor: 28 policy bills, zero conference committees and no Senate bills passed in the final week. And the 2025 surge in PQ use **raised** output. The 67 bills passed that year include 16 budget bills (the policy series above shows 50, and sources differ by a bill or so on the count), because the PQ broke the filibusters. Any account of obstruction has to treat 2024 as the extreme case and 2025 as the proof the majority could act when it chose to use the tool. No count of House-passed bills that died in the Senate is possible from the retrieved sources; filed-versus-passed is the proxy, and it is labeled as one.

8 · THE NATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

What the numbers can and cannot say about 2026

The obvious rebuttal is that 2026 was a national wave and the supermajority fell with it. The record has a control case: Democrats held the U.S. House after 2018 and both U.S. chambers in 2021–22, and Missouri's supermajorities survived (116 Republican House seats in 2018, 114 in 2020, 111 in 2022). A national headwind explains margin; it does not by itself explain 111 to 95 in one cycle, or a Senate that went from 24 to 22 on two flips (2026 figures unofficial).

What this study adds is timing. Output collapsed before 2026 (43 in 2022, 40 in 2023, 28 in 2024) while the supermajority was intact and filings rose. That fits the prompter's claim that the problem is internal and predates 2026, but it is not a controlled test. No comparison series was built (for example, other supermajority states' output), and the 2024 floor is heavily confounded by the 50-hour filibuster and an early Senate adjournment. The data shows a large internal decline was already underway before 2026; it does not show the national environment played no role.

9 · THE CASE AGAINST

The strongest counter-evidence

- **Output rebounded.** The legislature passed 67 bills in total in 2025 (16 of them appropriations bills), and the policy series went from 28 in 2024 to 50 in 2025 and 83 in 2026, the highest since 2018 (132). A story of pure paralysis does not fit 2025–2026. The "nothing passes" claim needs the 2014–2024 decline as its frame, not 2026 alone.
- **Lobbyist headcount is flat.** A claim that lobbyists have taken over must be about who they are and what they do, not how many there are, and that series does not exist yet.
- **Patterson reversed himself** in February 2026, and his HJR 73 dissent was on a measure voters then rejected.
- **Hough's record is mixed** on party lines, as above.
- **The 2026 election is not certified.** A recount in the closest races (HD-69 by 67 votes, HD-107 by 125 and SD-34 by 559) could move a seat. It could not restore either supermajority: the House would need 14 more Republican seats, and the Senate would need one more with no close Democratic Senate win to flip.

10 · WHAT IS STILL MISSING

Work the record cannot yet support

- Certified 2026 results, to re-check SD-8, SD-30, HD-69, HD-107 and SD-34.
- A per-session tenure series, and first-term share for 2010–2014.
- A Journal-based count of Previous Question motions, and a count of House-passed bills that died in the Senate.
- A revolving-door census (record-linkage of the full MEC register against rosters and staff directories).
- The enrolled text of SB 68, before its "teeth" assessment is final.
- Throughput gaps (filed totals for 2011–2013, signed counts for most years, some veto and override counts) and education gaps (a systematic keyword sweep for transparency bills in 2010–2021, several missing sponsors, the February 2026 permanent-ban bill number).
- A comparison series for the national-environment rebuttal, such as other supermajority states' output.

CLOSING THOUGHT

The strongest version of the argument, on the evidence

The steelman near the top of this study stated the argument before any evidence. This section returns to it with the record in hand. It is Claude's statement of the argument the prompter offers as a closing thought on the study, and it is an inference built on the record above, not a finding of it. It is followed by the places where it is weakest.

The case. Term limits make ambition the scarce organizing force in the Missouri legislature. A member has at most eight years in each chamber, and the only durable careers on offer are leadership posts and a run for higher office. For a Republican whose path to those offices ran through moderate or suburban constituencies, the incentive was to use institutional control (the Pro Tem's gavel, the Appropriations chair, the floor calendar, the Previous Question) to keep politically costly votes away from the members who needed to stay competitive there. That is the cheap-dissent, expensive-dissent mechanism seen in the Patterson and Hough cases. Obstruction on this reading was less about ideology than about career protection, and it is consistent with the throughput collapse of 2022–2024.

The bargain had a purpose, and it can be judged against it. Shielding members from costly votes was meant to hold the moderate-leaning districts that had propelled them into leadership, and holding those seats was meant to preserve the supermajority, because only a majority that large could enact substantive policy. On this reading the maneuvering failed at both ends. It did not produce the policy: output fell to a floor of 28 policy bills in 2024, against 170 in 2014. And it did not keep the seats or the supermajority: Patterson's Senate district and Hough's Senate district both flipped to Democrats in 2026, and the caucus fell from 111 House seats to 95 and from 24 Senate seats to 22 (2026 figures unofficial). If the swing reflects base discontent with exactly this style of leadership, then on this reading the strategy bore real costs (a collapse in output, an angry base) and still lost the constituencies and the supermajority it was meant to protect.

That produces a selection effect. A caucus reduced from 111 House seats to 95 and from 24 Senate seats to 22 is made up of the survivors, who are disproportionately members from districts where the base, not the median voter, is the operative electorate. The next leadership pool is drawn from them. If the party's winning theory in Missouri is now base-and-turnout rather than the median voter, then losing the supermajority removed the members whose personal incentives produced the obstruction, and the maneuvering that served ambitious moderates should matter less, at least in the short term, because there are fewer of them left to serve. On this view, losing the supermajority could leave the caucus more closely aligned with the voters who elect it.

Where it is weakest.

- **Motive is inferred.** The record documents the votes and the removals, not the reasons. Hough says his removal was retaliation, the Pro Tem says rotation, and no source explains Patterson's February 2026 reversal.

- **The cause of the swing is unproven.** A national environment, candidate quality and local factors all compete with "base discontent," and the study built no control comparison.
- **Two cases are not a census.** The record does not show who is left in the caucus, how they would be classed, or whether the survivors are the type the argument assumes.
- **Ambition does not disappear.** It can redirect. Members from base-oriented districts who want leadership or higher office can use the same procedural tools, and 2025 showed the majority could act when it chose to.
- **It is a bet on the theory.** If the median voter still decides Missouri's swing seats, a smaller caucus drawn from the base is a weaker position, not a stronger one.

Testing it would need a roll-call-based ideology score for the 2027 caucus against 2025, certified 2026 results, and a comparison series for the national environment.

METHOD, LIMITS AND SOURCES

- **Source package:** a research package of 6 datasets, notes and a findings memo, assembled 5 November 2026 with all sources accessed that day, except the 2026 election results, last checked early on 4 November. It cites 171 unique URLs, grouped by dataset. The page uses only that record and adds nothing from outside it.
- **2026 results:** unofficial, precinct-complete, from the Missouri Secretary of State, last checked 4 November 2026. Several race-level counts are partly verified: winners and rounded shares are confirmed by multiple outlets, but exact counts could not be re-pulled from the Secretary of State's page.
- **Throughput:** House TAFP chart (policy bills plus TAFP resolutions), supplemented by end-of-session reports. Gaps are blank, not estimated.
- **Churn:** Ballotpedia term-limits and election pages. First-term share counts general-election winners without an incumbent marker.
- **Lobbyists:** Missouri Ethics Commission annual reports (calendar-year, Legislative branch, 2019–2025), earlier registration counts. Calendar-year

and fiscal-year series are never spliced.

- **Limits:** these are associations and documented events, not causal estimates. Several series are thin or absent, as the missing-work list shows, and no chart was drawn from a series marked "not found."

The numbers on this study were extracted from the package's datasets by script, and each chart traces to a named CSV file there. Source URLs by dataset are listed in the package's sources file.

SOURCES

Sources

The research package’s sources, accessed November 5, 2026 unless a data row says otherwise. Each row’s exact source, link and access date are in the study’s data files; the 171 distinct links are listed below by data set as recorded there (one appears under two data sets), including a few aggregator or mirror links where the original was retrieved that way.

Principal sources

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- Missouri Senate: bill tracking, Governor’s action pages, journals and newsroom (senate.mo.gov).
- Missouri Secretary of State: Election Night Reporting (enr.sos.mo.gov) and Executive Order 26-01 (sos.mo.gov). The 2026 election figures are precinct-complete unofficial results, not certified.
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DISCLOSURES

Disclosures and citation

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Question from Patrick Ishmael, a Missouri politics watcher.

ABOUT THE PROMPTER

Patrick Ishmael is the founder of the Ishmael Policy Institute and Prompt Inquiry's Founding Prompter and Editor. He has spent most of his career in and around Missouri public policy. He worked on political campaigns, and from May 2011 to January 2024 he worked at the Show-Me Institute, a Missouri public policy organization, where he wrote on state and local government and testified before Missouri legislative committees. Today he is a financial advisor and a Missouri attorney. He holds honors degrees in finance and political science from Saint Louis University and a law degree from Saint Louis University School of Law. Several of the questions he revisits here began as his own student work there.

This bio is the prompter's disclosure. It is the same on every study he leads.

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