



Coach Gates comments on Tigers' loss to Texas

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MO House passes trans care bill

Measure would permanently ban prescribing puberty blockers, hormones for minors

Annelise Hanshaw

Missouri Independent

The Missouri House passed legislation Thursday, Feb. 12, that would permanently bar doctors from prescribing puberty blockers and cross-sex hormones to transgender minors, sending the bill to the Senate for approval.

Lawmakers voted along party lines with 102 Republicans in favor and 40 Democrats voting against the bill. Democratic state Reps. Chanel Mosley from Black Jack and Stephanie Boykin of Florissant voted "present."

The bill's sponsor, state Rep. Melissa Schmidt, a Republican from Eldridge, said during debate on Monday, Feb. 9,

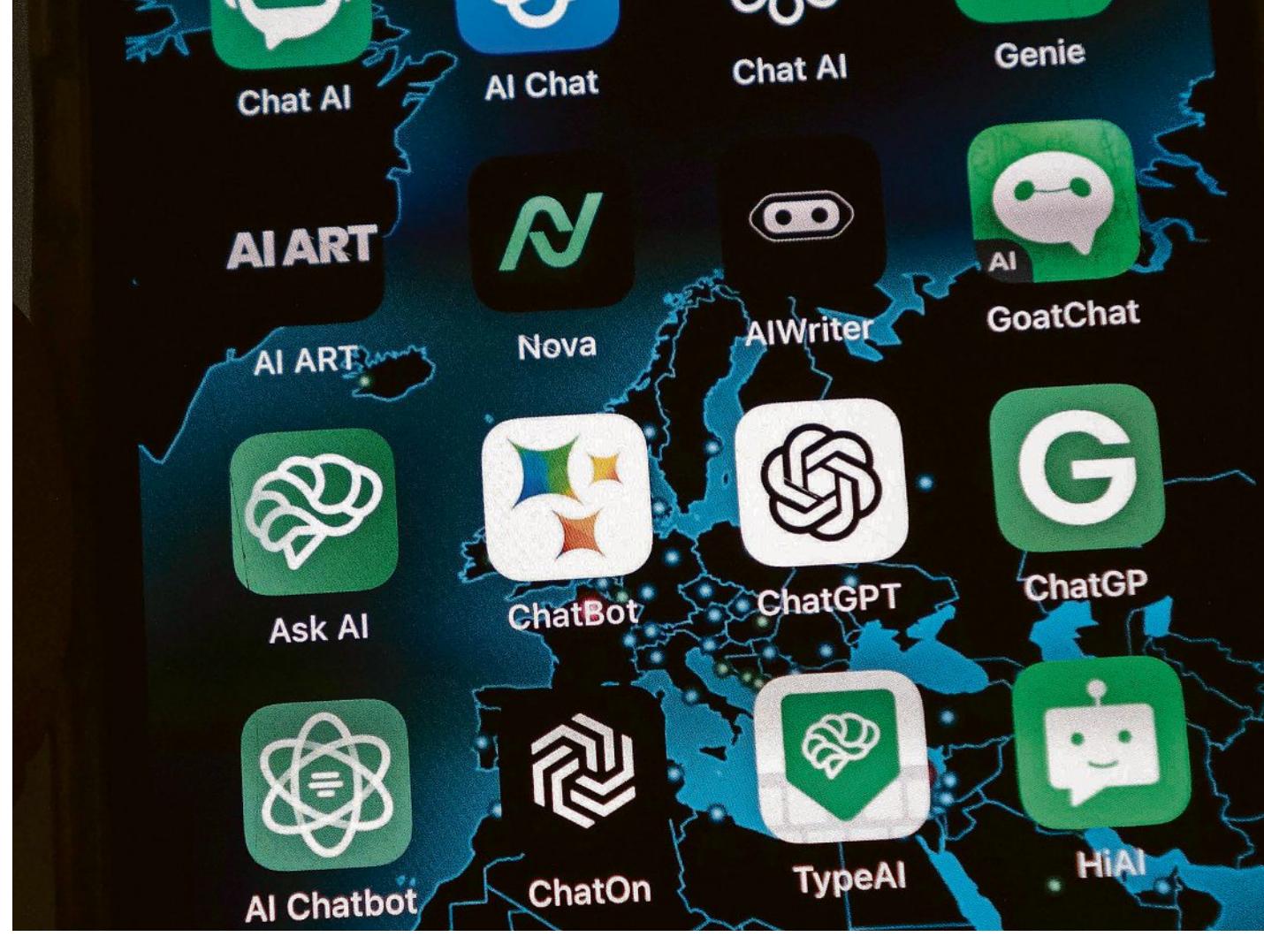
that she supports a "watchful waiting" approach to gender dysphoria in adolescents, advocating for counseling over medical intervention.

"Children become confused in many areas of their lives," she said. "They have many questions throughout their years of development, and we have a responsibility to speak the truth."

Since passing the state's restrictions on gender-affirming care for minors in 2023, Missouri lawmakers have filed bills every year seeking to remove the law's expiration date. Last year, the proposal was approved at the committee level and rolled into a 108-page Senate

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AI COMPANIES GEAR UP TO SELL ADS



Experts worry users could be manipulated

Bruce Schneier and Nathan Sanders Harvard University | THE CONVERSATION

Eighteen months ago, it was plausible that artificial intelligence might take a different path than social media. Back then, AI's development hadn't consolidated under a small number of big tech firms. Nor had it capitalized on consumer attention, surveilling users and delivering ads.

Unfortunately, the AI industry is now taking a page from the social media playbook and has set its sights on monetizing consumer attention. When OpenAI launched its ChatGPT Search feature in late 2024 and its browser, ChatGPT Atlas, in October 2025, it kicked off a race to capture online behavioral data to power advertising.

It's part of a yearslong turnabout by OpenAI, whose CEO Sam Altman once called the combination of ads and AI "unsettling" and now promises that ads can be deployed in AI apps while preserving trust. The rampant speculation among OpenAI users who believe they

see paid placements in ChatGPT responses suggests they are not convinced.

In 2024, AI search company Perplexity started experimenting with ads in its offerings. A few months after that, Microsoft introduced ads to its Copilot AI. Google's AI Mode for search now increasingly features ads, as does Amazon's Rufus chatbot.

As a security expert and data scientist, we see these examples as harbingers of a future where AI companies profit from manipulating their users'

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A 2023 meta-analysis of 121 randomized trials reported that AI models are as good as humans at shifting people's perceptions, attitudes and behaviors.

OLIVIER MORIN/

AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

Paid advertising in AI searches, and AI models generally, could look very different from traditional web searches. It has the potential to influence your thinking, spending patterns and even personal beliefs in much more subtle ways.

Janis Reeser

AI-assisted reporter
USA TODAY NETWORK

Columbia Public Schools has appointed new leaders for two of its schools for the 2026-27 academic year, according to a community announcement.

Mitchell Pittman to lead Beulah Ralph Elementary School

Mitchell Pittman has been named the new principal of Beulah Ralph Elementary School. He will replace Lance Foulk, who is retiring, according to the announcement.

Pittman brings more than a decade of experience in education, having served in various roles across Missouri.

He began his career teaching special education in the Sturgeon and Moberly school districts and later taught physical education and health at Rock Bridge High School in Columbia. Most recently, he served as an assistant principal at Ridgeway Elementary School before moving to his current role as assistant principal at Blue Ridge Elementary School.

Pittman holds a master's degree in educational leadership and policy analysis with an emphasis in K-12 building leadership. He also has an education specialist degree in educational leadership and policy analysis with an emphasis in superintendency.

John Higgins appointed director of Columbia Area Career Center

John Higgins has been selected as the director of the Columbia Area Career Center (CACC) for the upcoming school year. Higgins, the current assistant director at CACC, will take over from Brandon Russell, who announced his retirement earlier this year, according to the announcement.

Higgins has 14 years of experience in career and technical education.

He began his education career as a

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