



Mo. officials counting on NFL bets

Tax revenue from legalized sports getting well short of goal of more than \$25M

BY HANNAH WYMAN
St. Louis Post-Dispatch

Missouri is counting on the NFL to save its sports betting season. This summer, the state took stock of the tax revenues it had received so far from its

first year of legalized sports betting and found it was not yet halfway to its goal of more than \$25 million. State officials say they aren't concerned. The NFL season, which kicks off Wednesday, will bring in more than \$13 million by the end of November, they say. "You get into the start of football, and that's always a big deal," said Mike Leara, executive director of the Missouri Gaming Commission. "I'm still optimistic that the \$25 million will be accomplished. ... I'm not

ready to change the projection." Between Dec. 1, 2025, the beginning of legal betting, and the end of July 2026, the most recent month of available data, Missouri collected about \$11.77 million in taxes from \$2.5 billion in wagers statewide. The state has a 10% tax on revenue of sports betting operators. Leara noted that the state lost out on some money during the first few months of legal sports betting because of promotions that accompanied the beginning of legalization,

which coincided with the final few weeks of the NFL regular season. John Ewing, spokesperson for the sports-book giant BetMGM, said data backs up Missouri officials' expected betting spike. On average, NFL regular-season games garner five times as much money in wagers as the average NBA regular-season game. That number is even higher compared with other sports: eight times the amount of the

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TOUR DE FLORISSANT

CYCLISTS HIT STREETS FOR HOLIDAY RACE

Hundreds turn out for Gateway Cup finale, an annual Labor Day tradition



LIZ RYMAREV, POST-DISPATCH

Cyclists in the Category 4 and 5 race make a turn at the Tour de Florissant race in downtown Florissant on Monday, Sept. 7, 2026.

Developer eyes Bayer campus

Plan includes housing, retail, office upgrades

BY STEPH KUKULJAN
St. Louis Post-Dispatch

A St. Louis-area developer has roughly 90 acres of Bayer's Creve Coeur campus under contract to buy. Early plans call for housing, retail and office space. Developer Larry Chapman is

considering single-family and apartment housing, restaurants and entertainment venues and upgrading several existing office buildings and laboratories for other companies. City officials are slated to discuss Chapman's plans on Tuesday. The meeting will be a preview of the proposal where officials will offer feedback, Chapman said Friday. "It is challenging at this point to have everything buttoned down since this redevelopment is speculative in nature,"

according to a plan submitted to the city. "On the other hand, we are fortunate to be working with a couple of companies that, if we satisfy their requests, could kick this project off with a bang and further confirm our thoughts (we) have a true market demand." The application said the development team had yet to determine whether it would seek tax incentives.

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Restaurants generating AI images of dishes

Some local foodies, eatery owners push back on rising use in industry

BY SHUN GRAVES
St. Louis Post-Dispatch

ST. LOUIS — A perfectly circular piece of naan bread hovers above a woven basket. Meals shimmer with uncanny glaze. Aravind Mallarapu, owner of the Indian restaurant Biryani Adda in the city's Central West End neighborhood, motions to a nearby flyer. "That was built by AI," he says. "Everything here was built by AI. Everything." It's true of the restaurant's logo, which has different iterations in various spots in the restaurant. It's true of the menus and images of food as well as back-office tasks like calculating expenses, too. Even the restaurant's layout was designed by an artificial intelligence program. Mallarapu is one of many restaurateurs in St. Louis and nationwide embracing generative AI. They extol the ease and speed of using the tool to generate flyers and create images. There's a growing backlash. Food enthusiasts express revulsion at the productions, arguing it's dishonest marketing. Skeptics worry the practice will eliminate jobs for graphic designers, writers and photographers, among others. Online, critics describe AI-created images of food that's almost real — but not quite — as "spiritually unsettling." "I'll see the picture, and it'll show the hamburger," said Andrew Taylor, better known online as the St. Louis food reviewer Pizzababble. "And I'm like, 'That's not the hamburger that you have.'"

'Statistical fantasy of a hamburger'

At the corner of Forest Park and Taylor avenues, also in the Central West End, Global Quesadilla Co. advertises a "pineapples salsa" with an AI-generated image of a bowl filled with red-dish gruel that has a popcorn-ceiling texture.

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Missouri Senate leader wants to be state schools chief

BY KURT ERICKSON
St. Louis Post-Dispatch

JEFFERSON CITY — The outgoing president of the Missouri Senate wants to be the next state commissioner of education. Sen. Cindy O'Laughlin, a Shelbina Republican who is leaving office in January due to term limits, told the Post-Dispatch she has expressed her interest in the job, which opened earlier this year following the resignation of Commissioner Karla Eslinger. "I believe we need to focus on reading

and math and get our students up to grade level," she said. "If you can't do those things, it will be very hard to succeed in life." The Missouri State Board of Education is in the initial stages of hiring a search firm to begin gathering applications to identify potential candidates. "The State Board's goal is to have a new commissioner named by the end of 2026," said Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education spokesman Lucas Bond said Thursday.

The department did not respond to a request for what qualifications are needed for the position, which pays an estimated \$245,000 annually. Eslinger retired in May after two years in the post. Like O'Laughlin, Eslinger had been a state senator before taking the job. The board appointed Stacey Preis as interim commissioner in June. Preis previously served as DESE's deputy commissioner and spent six years with the Missouri General Assembly as executive director of the Joint Committee

on Education. She was working as a consultant before returning to the agency in June. Senate Minority Leader Doug Beck, D-Affton, said he does not believe O'Laughlin meets the qualifications for the post set forth in statute, which say the commissioner "shall possess an educational attainment and breadth of experience in the administration of public education."

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