



## **Gov. Parson signs bill to raise marriage age in Missouri**

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JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. — Gov. Mike Parson signed legislation Friday raising the marriage age in Missouri from 15 to 16 and requiring parental permission for older teenagers to marry.

The bill was among several signed or vetoed by the Republican governor as he wrapped up his decision making on legislation just ahead of a constitutional deadline to do so. One of the vetoed bills included a legislative goof up in an attempt to replace a former politician's statue in the U.S. Capitol with one of former Missouri-born President Harry Truman.

The new marriage law, which will take effect Aug. 28, requires 16 and 17-year-olds to receive parental permission to be married and bars someone 21 or older from marrying anyone 17 or younger.

“This is a huge victory in our effort to protect young people and end the state's reputation as the easiest place in the country for a 15-year-old to be married,” Republican Rep. Jean Evans said in a written statement. Evans had pushed for the measure in the House.

Although the bill passed the Legislature overwhelmingly, some lawmakers had said raising the marriage age infringes on parents' rights.

That law also provides a way for people convicted of some sex crimes to be removed from the sex offender registry and repeals the statute of limitations for prosecuting sex crimes against children.

“The welfare of our children must always be a top priority,” Parson said in a statement.

Parson signed six bills Friday, for a total of 63 since he took office last month.

Another signed bill changes how some local minimum wages are calculated for public works projects. Republicans have argued that the changes will help local governments save money, while many Democrats have argued that the proposal will depress wages and hurt small contractors.

A third new law requires school districts to notify parents if certain student data is stolen and mandates that sex education curriculum include information about “sexual harassment, sexual violence, and consent.”

Parson vetoed a resolution that would remove a statue of former U.S. Sen. Thomas Hart Benton from Washington D.C., because the proposal accidentally confuses Benton with his great-great-nephew. Benton is one of two statues currently representing Missouri in the National Statuary Hall collection, and lawmakers voted this year to replace Benton with Truman. But the proposal delivered to the governor instead describes Benton's distant relative, also named Thomas Hart Benton, who was a famous painter.

Parson also vetoed two bills that he said appeared to be written to benefit a particular person or entity in violation of a constitutional prohibition on special laws.

One vetoed bill would have allowed high school computer science courses to count toward math, science or practical art credits needed for graduation. In a letter to lawmakers, Parson said he objected to a provision creating an online career awareness program for science, technology, engineering and mathematics professions because the detailed criteria for bidders "appear to be narrowly tailored to apply to only one company."

His letter did not identify that company.

Parson also vetoed a wide-ranging bill dealing with treatment courts, judicial retirement plans and efforts to clean up abandoned property. In a letter to lawmakers, he said the bill appeared to violate constitutional prohibitions on changing a bill's original purpose and including multiple subjects. He also said the judicial pension provision appeared to unconstitutionally benefit only one judge.

The Missouri State Employees' Retirement System said the only judge who would have qualified for the pension provision is Cape Girardeau County Judge Scott Lipke, a former Republican state House member.

Lawmakers meet in September to consider veto overrides.