Period Law / Missouri Tampon Tax / Talking Points
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The Tampon Tax Unfairly Burdens Poor Women.
• A sales tax on menstrual products (aka the tampon tax) unfairly burdens the state’s lowest income group, women and children. 13.50% of women in Missouri live in poverty, while the national figure is 11.70%. Low-income citizens may be forced to choose between purchasing menstrual products and other necessities.
• The American Medical Association deems menstrual products “essential for women’s health” and has called the tampon tax a “regressive” penalty. After a comprehensive study, the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology concluded that “research supports the repeal of this tax in consideration of its financial, social, and political implications.” The average usage is more than 16,000 tampons or pads in a lifetime.
• Even though Missouri has few sales tax exemptions, Missouri does exempt other items, including ticket sales to college athletic events.
• A study conducted in New Jersey showed that removing the tampon tax provides a disproportionate economic benefit to poor women who, unlike wealthier women, cannot afford to buy period products more cheaply in bulk.

Menstrual Products are Medical Necessities.
• The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) classifies menstrual tampons as Class II medical devices and pads as Class I medical devices. The 2020 CARES Act designated menstrual products as medical necessities for HSA and FSA accounts.

The Cost of Removing the Tax Is Negligible.
• Missouri collects approximately $5.9 million from the sales tax on menstrual products. Record-high revenues over the last year have yielded a projected $1.6 billion general revenue surplus at the end of June 2023. The tampon tax amounts to less than .01% of Missouri’s total revenue.

Removing The Tax Is a Bipartisan Issue in Missouri.
• Eliminating the tampon tax has garnered bipartisan support across the country, including in Missouri, with members of both political parties introducing legislation and signing bills into law to eliminate it.
• Earlier this year, Governor Greg Abbott called for a tampon tax exemption in Texas, recognizing that “[t]hese are essential products for women’s health and quality of life.”
• When exempting menstrual products in California in 2019, Governor Gavin Newsom said, “We can afford to do that, and it’s the right thing to do.”

The Tampon Tax Is Unconstitutional.
• The sales tax on menstrual products treats individuals differently based solely on gender.
• Constitutional law scholars from across the country, including Erwin Chemerinsky, Dean of UC Berkeley Law School, have argued that the tampon tax amounts to sex-based discrimination in violation of equal protection at both the state and federal levels.
• Period Law has successfully sued on this issue. We coordinated a class action lawsuit in New York in 2016 on behalf of women who paid the tax, prompting the state to end its tax within
Four states – Connecticut, Florida, Illinois, and Nevada—followed suit. In 2020, we sued the state of Michigan with the same result. Forty states taxed menstrual products when we began, and 18 have now ended the practice voluntarily or under the pressure of a lawsuit.

\[^{xix}\] Period Law estimates are available at www.periodlaw.org/resources.