

Editor's Note

This is our fourth issue and we are well along planning the next three issues of the journal.

Two of the articles in this issue address criminal court issues, but in different ways, highlighting interesting methodologies used to study Missouri courts. One article discusses an innovative court process known as a “treatment court” as a method used to help drug offenders. The other article examines whether race has been the basis for sentencing disparities in Missouri courts and concludes that external factors (such as criminal history, age, and severity of a crime) have mattered more. Both articles together provide insightful and instructive ways to examine and understand aspects of the Missouri court system.

The third article studies the impact of the United States Supreme Court case, *Obergefell v Hodges*, which legalized same-sex marriages across the country in 2015. It focuses on Missouri counties in particular, noting that some were slower than others in implementing the high court’s ruling. St. Louis Mayor Francis Slay, in fact, married four same-sex couples in June 2014, a year before the court handed down its decision.

The fourth article focuses on the departure of the St. Louis Rams. As this essay concludes, “[The] Rams saga serves as a cautionary tale to governments throughout the United States.”

We hope these articles continue our aim of providing readable yet scholarly articles that address issues of importance to Missouri in ways that avoid, if not transcend, the often ideologically-tainted approaches toward policy discussion that dominate cable TV news, where liberal versus conservative is supposed to mean something and, oftentimes, only serves to cloud discussions of important issues.

With this issue we added an additional feature: charts that show some data on issues of importance to Missouri (SNAP, Social Security, and Unemployment). Future issues will also include other policy relevant information presented in similar formats. These three charts were completed by a Lindenwood University student, Aaron Azkoul, who did them through our GIS program.

Joseph A. Cernik, Editor