



Lair's Legislative Log...



REPRESENTATIVE MIKE LAIR—DISTRICT 7

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The 96th General Assembly's Veto Session is in the books, while the Special Session trudges onward. We have had a multitude of committee meetings with abundant testimony and have used our time to advance significant issues affecting the state. The anti-tax credit special interest groups are circling the Capitol in a feeding frenzy smelling blood in the water.

We have not seen the economic development bill that passed out of the Senate, but I did hear that the "circuit breaker" tax credit was culled from the bill. Early this week, I plan to attend the House committee meeting that will hear the bill. The "circuit breaker" provision was a Senate stipulation, so I do not see it being resurrected in the House.

For an hour on Wednesday, we were in a technical session and in Veto Session at the same time. A technical session is a method by which bills can be advanced on the House Calendar and accepted from the Senate without a quorum of the representatives being present, but with the Chief Clerk's Office fully staffed to handle the bookwork. None of the Governor's vetoes were overturned because we could not muster the required 108 votes necessary to do so.

However, the Special Session committee meetings continued unabated. The Budget Committee renewed its request for the Governor to expand the call to include accessing the Rainy Day Fund for disaster relief and releasing the

\$179 M, he has withheld from K-12, Higher Education, and numerous social programs. The contention of the bipartisan request is that his withhold without a corresponding revenue shortfall is unconstitutional. The Committee on Renewable Energy was created after a Renewable Energy Standard was passed in 2008 by 66% of Missouri Voters. That committee has requested that the governor add HB613 to our extraordinary session to establish the Renewable Energy Act.

In our Joint House/Senate Education Committee, we heard testimony from Dr. Stacey Preis, Executive Director, on the negative impact of the current school funding formula on Missouri school districts if it is not revamped during the next legislative session. Several of us tried to pass a solution to the coming "train wreck" last year. We made it through the committee process, through the House, and it was derailed in the Senate. This is one issue that must be handled or the redistribution of the formula funds will change drastically for many of our five hundred plus districts. Paul Wagner, legislative liaison, of the Department of Higher Education, made the second presentation. Dr. Wagner reported on how Missouri's colleges and universities measure up to the goals set for them by the legislature. The goals include the preparation of students for college work, the number of Missouri students who enroll in post-secondary programs, the persistence to graduation rate, and affordability of a Missouri degree. The report was broken

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down by institution and was quite informative as to how the institutions compare to each other.

This week's largest contingent of Capitol visitors were the veteran groups that rallied to support the funding of state veteran services. The rally itself was sponsored by the Missouri Association of Veteran Organizations (MAVO) and was held in the Capitol Rotunda at 9:00 am on Wednesday. Veterans spent the remainder of the day visiting legislators. 7th District visitors, George Laparde and Don Underwood stopped by my office and stressed the necessity of creating a dedicated funding stream for the state's obligation to its men and women in uniform. Bradley Haggard, Administrator of the Cameron Veterans' Home, also called on me to garner support. After visiting with the Speaker of the House and the budget chair, I am positive that the needed \$30M will be allocated. There are several plans for obtaining those funds and creating the dedicated funding stream necessary to make this a reality.

Earlier in the Special Session, constituent Steve Radcliff, alerted me to an important committee meeting to be held last week. Steve testified before the Agriculture and Natural Resources Appropriations Committee on behalf of the Soil and Water Districts and their difference of opinion with the Department of Natural Resources as to the control they assert over day-to-day operations of the districts. No decision was arrived at, but the hearing allowed for a fairly complete airing of the areas of contention. Both sides quoted state statutes and the committee chair said an Attorney General's opinion might be requested.

On a personal note, I was pleased to see many of my fellow House members during the Veto and Special Sessions. Like any other large group of people, there were many changes. These changes included pounds lost and gained, several medical procedures, a fight against cancer, births, loved ones lost, a near-death experience, and of course interim committees and proposed legislation. I did not realize how valued the friendship of some of these colleagues would be to me. As in any diverse group, there are members who are not close associates, but I respect the majority of them and the job they do.

Thank you for the privilege of representing the citizens of the 7th District. As always, Gregg and I are at your service at (573) 751-2917, or mike.lair@house.mo.gov or State Capitol, 201 West Capitol Avenue, Room 400, Jefferson City, MO 65101. My website is www.RepMikeLair.com

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