



Lair's Legislative Log...



REPRESENTATIVE MIKE LAIR—DISTRICT 7

Volume III #33

August 15, 2011

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Three score years ago, in 1951, my parents were preparing me for my first day of formal schooling. That same ritual is occurring around the 7th District in all fifteen school districts. Young people are wondering about their instructors, their classes, and their friends and parents are pleased that an outlet for their prodigy's energy is being provided.

My grade school was Holy Cross in Omaha, Nebraska. It was the largest denominational grade school between Chicago and Denver. Nuns from the Sisters of Mercy staffed it and my first teacher was Sister Mary Dorothy. We were jammed into classrooms because we were the beginning of the surge in population known as the baby-boomers. Our parents had just experienced the greatest crusade in human history to save the world from the German and Japanese domination and wanted to experience domestic tranquility.

As I stated earlier, we were jammed into classrooms. We had one teacher, no aids, and we learned to read without reading groups, without phonics, without new improved reading programs. We learned to decipher the many secrets of the English language because it was expected of us. Our parents were supportive, active, and interested in our academic progress. My mother had a nursing degree and my father attended night school to finish high school after he returned from the United States Marine Corps. Both

my parents were avid readers and they passed that quality to me as evidenced by the stacks of books that were around our home and that surround me now as I write this epistle. My memories of grade school are few, but I do remember that I was assigned to carry the young man with disabilities up and down the stairs whenever there was need. Eddy and I became great friends mainly, I suppose, because I never dropped him.

My secondary education was gained at Creighton Preparatory School, an all boys Jesuit high school, also in Omaha. We were grouped by ability and I was somewhere in the middle. I remember strenuous classes that included logic, rhetoric, philosophy, theology, Greek (two years, only the smart kids had it four years) and four years of Latin. One of my favorite classes was *Communism versus Democracy* that was taught by the head football coach. I remember the football championships and being a small part of something much greater than myself. The classical education that I received included the sciences and math classes that were considered necessary, but focused on values and work ethic.

I have two reasons for sharing my K-12 educational history. First, parents you have a tremendous responsibility for your children's formative years. Part of your responsibility lies in making certain your offspring realizes how important their education is to you.

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You are the key to your student's attitude as they enter the fall semester. If you care – they will care. Encourage, cajole, reward, and yes drop the hammer if they disappoint you. Take ownership, even if their educational career has not been top-notch...start now...start fresh...it is never too late, with your help. Secondly, for the students, you need ownership as well. It is your education and your life. Do not take the weakest class schedule possible to make school easy or boost your GPA. Take advantage of all that is offered and do the best you can. Be involved in your school. The extra-curricular activities offered by all high schools teach lessons that are life changing and will serve you the rest of your days. I promise that your teachers and administrators will give you the best education that they can, but no one can teach a student that does not want to learn.

I received word last week that the Speaker of the House appointed me to the Interim Committee on Budget Transparency. The Speaker's letter stated that the committee..."will study the efficiency and transparency of all branches of the government including the possible existence of fraud, mismanagement, corruption, waste, conflict of interests, and improper expenditure of Government funds in transactions, contracts, and activities of Government or Government officials and employees." We are given the responsibility to meet eight times between our first meeting August 24 and the start of session the first week in January. The Speaker's charge to us seems somewhat ambitious, but I am anxious to get to work.

Last Wednesday evening I spoke to a gathering of Carroll County retired teachers and their spouses. I discussed many educational issues with the stability of the Public School Retirement System as the most significant to that audience. There are yearly legislative efforts to redesign one of the most successful public employee retirement systems in the nation. As a member of the Retirement Committee, I work with all relevant groups to safeguard the promises made to our educators.

Late summer is vacation time for many. My Legislative Assistant, Gregg, will not be in the office this week. Feel free to leave a message or call me on my cell phone 660-247-1856. Thank you for the privilege of representing the citizens of the 7th District. As always, I am 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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