



Lair's Legislative Log...



REPRESENTATIVE MIKE LAIR—DISTRICT 7

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The gavel dropped on the Second Session of the 96th General Assembly last Wednesday and it was almost anticlimactic. There has been so much pre-session work done by interim committees that in some ways it seems as if we never left the Capitol. The Speaker outlined our *Blueprint for Missouri* plan, which includes four pillars: Missouri Taxpayers, Missouri Jobs, Missouri Schools, and Missouri Values.

The taxpayer pillar consists of a no new taxes pledge and a real balanced budget. A Taxpayer Protection Act limits future state tax collections on factors like population growth and rates of inflation. This legislation goes hand-in-hand with the Hancock Amendment to limit future legislatures' ability to expand state government. County Debt Discloser will require county governments to list county debts for citizen review. Our 7th District Counties are all aboveboard on county finances, but that is not the case statewide and there are counties where the debt load is multiple thousands of dollars per county resident. We are also working on Criminal Justice Reform in regard to sentencing and parole. I filed a bill (HB 1175) Thursday that will deal with geriatric offenders.

The jobs component will contain a workman's compensation fix, a second injury fund fix, employment law reform, and my personal favorite tort reform. The most impressive part of the tort reform package is Loser Pays.

It will make it easier to get meritless lawsuits thrown out of court. It will be attacked by the trial attorney's lobby, one of the strongest and best-funded groups in the state.

The issues to be addressed in the education element of the plan consist of legislation to address the Turner Fix (students fleeing from unaccredited schools), Charter Schools, the Teacher Quality Act, and the Foundation Formula fix. One of my daily tasks in the Legislature is to remind my fellow members that the bottom line in any education legislation must be the student not the institutions.

The Missouri Values component of the plan includes a pro-life bill, an attempt to create a dedicated stream of funding for Missouri Veterans' Homes, mandatory child abuse reporting legislation, expanded college savings plan, driver's license test in English bill, and Voter ID.

Discussions of several national issues have spilled over into the Missouri General Assembly. The taxing of internet sales was one of the first issues brought to my attention by one of the 7th District county commissions after my initial election in 2008. The main issue is that local retailers must charge sales tax on all purchases and feel that internet retailers have an unfair advantage not charging sales taxes. Of course, continuing that logic, local, county, and state governmental entities miss out on the added revenues as well. There are several different levels

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of problems associated with an internet tax. Article 1, Section 8, Clause 3 of the United States Constitution contains a provision known as the commerce clause; it states that no state shall impede commerce between the states. In the 1960s, states demanded that catalog retailers collect their sales taxes and the Supreme Court issued a ruling called the *Quill Decision* that stated because of the complicated and diverse state tax laws it would be an unreasonable burden to ask a catalog retailer to collect taxes in all states. They had to collect taxes in only the states that the retailer had a physical presence. The complicated state tax laws can be illustrated by the five different categories that firearms may be taxed under in different states. There is a group of thirty states that have voluntarily simplified their tax codes by adhering to the Streamlined Sales Tax Project (SSTP), a ten-year effort to help states and local governments collect internet sales taxes. If Missouri chooses to join the SSTP, it could pave the way to tax internet sales.

The Keystone XL pipeline is at the critical stage of implementation. The United States Department of State is in the process of determining whether a pipeline carrying 700,000 barrels of Canadian oil from Alberta to United States Gulf Coast refineries is “*in the national interest.*” It is low cost, high-grade crude oil that will generate 120,000 jobs in America; it is estimated it will create \$20 Billion in economic growth and hundreds of millions in tax revenue to federal, state, and local coffers. It will be built with state-of-the-art technology to be the safest pipeline ever constructed. Additionally, it will help insulate the United States from the fluctuation in sup-

ply and cost that accompanies international unrest. It seems to me that the pipeline proposal meets the criteria of “in the national interest,” and should be approved posthaste.

If you are a registered voter within the 7th District, you should have received this week in the mail my 2012 Legislative Survey. I believe all of the questions have been discussed in my weekly log within the last six months. I ask you to please fill it out and send it back to the office as soon as practical. I will see some of these issues in the coming weeks. Please take part in your Republic's government.

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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