



Lair's Legislative Log...



REPRESENTATIVE MIKE LAIR—DISTRICT 7

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The dog days of summer have been broken up a bit by some moderated temperatures and scattered showers. We will soon see the iron grip of summer give way to the warm afternoons and cooler nights of early fall. Communications have come in hot and heavy this week on a variety of topics.

The largest volume of epistles dealt with the looming special session and the tax credit debate. Much of the three-hundred-plus-page economic development bill, that is the centerpiece of the special session, deals with the sun setting and capping of some tax credits, the elimination of others, and the expansion of still others.

My mail ranged the full 360-degree spectrum of opinions. I had a comment of *"if you don't pay taxes, how can you expect a tax credit,"* all the way to the nanny-state entitlement rhetoric that anyone who wants government help should get it. As with all of the broad-based debates that we as a free people have between ourselves, the truth lies somewhere in between the two extreme poles. There are American citizens who need help and should receive it, but we cannot continue to foster the welfare state mentality of entitlement that has created a generational welfare cycle that resists our best efforts to dismantle it. The racial gulf in family income persists and has widened according to 2010 Census figures. I read an article with the author claiming that one in six children in the United States has an

issue with hunger – *how can that be?* We produce more food than we consume. We export tons of agricultural products. The United States hands out foreign aid by the billions of dollars and we have children who are hungry? Handouts are not the long-term answer – we have tried that. Throwing money at education is not the answer – we have tried that as well. We, as a state, must begin the process by getting people back to work and make earning a living a goal and something of which to be proud.

The next largest generator of mail was the Amy Hester Student Protection Act. In my opinion, the best part of this legislation is the provision that mandates that school districts share information on employees that were accused of improper conduct with students. It would end the practice of "passing the trash," where one district is reluctant to share an employee's history of misconduct with a prospective employer because of legal repercussions. In fact, it would make the first district liable for damages if they conceal that employee's history of sexual misconduct.

Another aspect of the School Protection Act will require the local school boards to establish a written policy for the electronic communications between district employees and students. The districts have always had this power, but now must do so by January 1, 2012. I urge the local boards to use caution when creating these policies.

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The easy thing to do would be to ban all such communication, but in doing so, school boards would remove an extremely effective tool from their school personnel. Chillicothe R-II District now uses a text message system to inform school employees, students, and patrons of pertinent bulletins pertaining to school closures, weather-related announcements, and athletic contest changes. Coaches, activity sponsors, and administrators can communicate with large numbers of students in an instant by using new electronic technology. We trust these professionals with our children for many hours during the school year and using one-on-one means of instant communication is a tool that is quite effective in producing the results we demand of them. No one wants a child to suffer abuse; inappropriate communication should be banned, but school boards need to be proactive not reactive on this issue.

In my mail, I received a letter that attempted to make the United States Postal Service post office closures into a political issue. The email claimed that 2,500 offices in Republican districts were under threat of closure while only about 1,000 in Democratic districts were similarly targeted. After some thought, it seems apparent that the majority of post offices that serve Republican districts are rural, thusly handling less mail than their urban counterparts. As always, statistics can be spun to fit any agenda. I do not believe that there is a political bias to the USPS decisions.

On a positive note, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, in a July 29 press release, announced a new strategy for

evacuating floodwaters from its six main stem dams along the Missouri river. "This plan allows the Corps to evacuate floodwater from the reservoir system in a responsible way to prepare for the 2012 runoff season, while reducing the effects of further damages..." Brig. Gen. John McMahon, Northwestern Division Commander, went on to say, "...homeowners, farmers, and businesses can get can get back on their properties to begin repair and recovery as quickly as possible." You can view the whole press release and projected release amounts on the Northwest Division website: www.nwd-mr.usace.army.mil/rcc.

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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