



# Lair's Legislative Log...



REPRESENTATIVE MIKE LAIR—DISTRICT 7

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[www.RepMikeLair.com](http://www.RepMikeLair.com)

Room 400  
State Capitol  
201 West Capitol Avenue  
Jefferson City, MO  
65101

PH: 573-751-2917

Fax: 573-566-9775

Email:

[Mike.Lair@house.mo.gov](mailto:Mike.Lair@house.mo.gov)



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There you can view video clips, read legislation and hear the House Floor debate live.

New beginnings dominate this first week of 2012. Our schoolchildren and educators begin the second semester, several of my acquaintances begin new jobs, some long-time workers will retire, New Year's resolutions take affect, and a new legislative session begins at noon on Wednesday, January 4. As the eternal optimist, I hope all of the "new" directions our lives are taking give us what we desire from them.

There is much less *pomp and circumstance* associated with the opening of the second session of a legislature than with the first. There will be majority and minority caucuses to try to get all of the frogs in the wheelbarrows. There will be introductions of new House employees, who will replace retirees, and the obligatory messages from House to Senate and from Senate to House to inform each body that the other is in session. The House Rules adopted by the first session will still apply, so, we will be able to get to work more rapidly. The four members elected in special elections to fill vacated seats, will not be sworn in for the first time until Monday, January 9. The delay will allow them to sidestep the term limit law by not serving a full year, thus being eligible for election four more times, and serve nine years instead of eight.

My Appropriations – Education Committee will begin work two weeks early with work sessions to acquaint the members with several issues we

have not seen before, but will face during the budget process. We are miles ahead already because of the committee experience the freshmen members had last year, as well as the interim work that we as a committee undertook between sessions. We will need to be sharp as our budgeting task will be daunting.

Every day's news brings announcements of candidates seeking new positions in the 2012 election cycle; of legislators seeking statewide office, House members running for the Senate, term limited Senate members running for the House, House members running against each other because of redistricting, and House members running for leadership. It is hard to know the players without a program.

The prison reform movement that I reported on last week has been enhanced by a report issued by the bipartisan, fifteen-member Working Group on Sentencing and Corrections, co-chaired by a House Democrat and a Senate Republican. The committee begins its report with the sobering fact that Missouri's prison population has more than doubled since 1990 and spending on corrections has tripled to over \$660 million during that same period. The tight budgetary climate of state government is the perfect time for legislatures to look at ways to reform the system, thus benefiting everyone, including the taxpayer. There have been efforts nationwide to trim offender populations, reform sentenc-

COMMITTEES:**CHAIR:**APPROPRIATIONS—  
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ON EDUCATION

ing and probation practices. I can only hope good legislation comes from these efforts that help all concerned in the process.

The Governor is poised to appoint a new director of the Department of Economic Development to replace David Kerr, who recently resigned amid accusations resulting from the Moberly Mamtek debacle. Mr. Kerr's tenure in the office included several positive efforts, but point out a fact that must be considered by his replacement. The job creation department of Missouri's government has to fulfill its main function, not act as a photo op generator for the governor.

Capitol, 201 West Capitol Avenue, Room 400, Jefferson City, MO 65101. My website is [www.RepMikeLair.com](http://www.RepMikeLair.com)

*Mike Lair*

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Has the weight of government felt a bit heavier in the last 24 hours? It should. MSNBC reported that over 40,000 new laws went into effect as of the first of the year. These laws are mostly from the fifty states and include the abolishment of Happy Hours in Utah and safer golf carts in Georgia. They have some common themes, such as, child protection, immigration, budgetary help, texting and cell phone bans, voter ID, and citizen privacy protection. I am sure that there were a healthy number that established state birds, rocks, mammals, and reptiles as well. The two federal laws that will impact the most Americans are an increase in Social Security benefits and a cell phone ban for bus drivers and over-the-road truckers.

Thank you for the privilege of representing the citizens of the 7<sup>th</sup> District. As always, Gregg and I are at your service at (573) 751-2917, or [mike.lair@house.mo.gov](mailto:mike.lair@house.mo.gov) or State

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