



Lair's Legislative Log...



REPRESENTATIVE MIKE LAIR — DISTRICT 7

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The old adage, “the more things change, the more they stay the same” is as true in the City of Jefferson as it is in our daily lives. The second week of the second session of the 96th General Assembly slipped into a secure pace with constituent meetings, short floor gatherings, and extensive committee work. We will operate in the second session under the same House Rules that we established for the first session, so that is one less thing to read and learn. As I come in sight of the Capitol Dome each morning on my commute, I say the same prayer that I have said every day for four years, *“Lord, grant me the peace of mind to know what I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.”*

My Appropriations-Education Committee began our committee work Tuesday at 8:00 am. We took testimony from Dr. Stacey Preis, Executive Director of the Joint House/Senate Education Committee, on the history and financial stability of the school funding foundation formula. Dr. Preis researched the formula by school district size and effect of state educational aid on district budgets with variables of average daily attendance (ADA), professional development expenditures, average teacher salaries, administrator’s salaries, and formula/hold harmless districts. I have taken three classes on research and statistics and have learned more from working with Dr. Preis over the last three years than I ever did in college. But, I also remember what Mark Twain said,

“There are three kinds of liars: liars, damn liars, and statisticians.”

The second witness finished our information session on school funding. Mike Thompson, a fellow representative from Maryville, has filed HB 1043, which addresses a flaw in the formula that surfaced when the tight budget stopped the state from fully funding the new (2005) law. We have worked with DESE and several professional education associations to fix this problem for two years. It passed through the House, but stalled in the Senate last year. Chillicothe sports fans may remember Representative Thompson as a Spoofhound track and football coach for many years. He is a good friend. My committee will meet again Tuesday and Wednesday of this week to take public testimony.

On a related note, the most discouraging statistic that I heard all week was that there could be several thousand school-aged children not accounted for in Kansas City. We always use the number of approximately seventeen thousand students in Kansas City. In reality there could be nearly twenty thousand. Where are they? What are they learning? Who lost track of them? These are all questions that need answering from the morass that is the Kansas City School District.

On Wednesday morning, I attended an event hosted by the Missouri Community College Association. MCCA presented a legislative agenda that included a plea for a preservation of

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their core funding and elimination of the Governor's withholds of their funds over the last several years. I will work to preserve as much of core budget as I can, but I can do nothing about the withholds. Dr. Neil Nuttall, the president of North Central Missouri College in Trenton, presented this agenda to the selected group of legislators and community college presidents. Dr. Nuttall serves MCCA as the Legislative Chair of that organization and spoke at some length about the A+ program and its successes at community colleges statewide and at NCMC.

The full Budget Committee met Wednesday to hear testimony on House Joint Resolution 43 known as the Taxpayer Protection Act. This resolution, if passed, would go to a vote of the people as a constitutional amendment. Simply stated, this measure would prohibit state spending from exceeding the 2008 level of \$8B unless general revenue again reached that level. At that level, increases could be made at a rate equal to the rate of inflation and any excess general revenue collected would be used to pay down state debt. The rationale presented by the bill sponsor was that this measure would stop the boom and bust cycle that has plagued state government. Several witnesses testified in favor of the measure and several against, with the main argument against summed up by a Democratic representative as, "*I truly believe we are not spending enough.*" I am of the opinion that, with the \$750M shortfall we are facing, this is an irresponsible point-of-view.

All appropriations committee chairs met with House Budget Chairman,

Ryan Silvey, on Tuesday to get some real budget numbers and direction for this year's budget creation. The factors we discussed included: consensus revenue estimate of 3.9%, \$750M shortfall from the FY2012 Budget, Governor's carryover funds, Governor's 2% pay raise promise to state employees, and procedural matters of committee governance.

For those of you who call our office, you may hear a female voice for a change. That voice belongs to Sophie Mashburn, a full time intern from MU who will serve the 7th District during this session. You can see a picture of Sophie with Speaker of the House, Steve Tilley and me on my website.

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

Mike Lair



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Welcome to the Capital...



Representative Mike Lair, new 7th District Intern Sophie Mashburn, and Speaker of the House Steve Tilley in the House Chamber.

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Representative Lair and Trent Norman's Flat Stanley on the House Floor. Trent is a student in Mrs. Shira Stinger's fourth grade class at Central Elementary.