



Lair's Legislative Log...



REPRESENTATIVE MIKE LAIR—DISTRICT 7

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Friday of this week marks Veterans Day. On the 11th hour, of the 11th day, of the 11th month of 1918 an armistice went into effect between Germany and her allies and the Allied nations that effectively ended World War One. This day is intended to honor all men and women who have served in the military and to thank them for their service. There are several observances planned for the 7th District; plan to attend one of these events or just thank a veteran for the freedoms that we enjoy. You may also wish to mark your calendars to attend a Missouri Veterans Commission Town Hall Meeting to be held at the Cameron Veterans Home Tuesday, November 15 at 7:00 p.m. to discuss the future of Missouri Veterans Homes.

My in-district meetings and legislative interim committees have ramped up to a good pace. I am preparing for the Second Session of the 96th General Assembly with two major points of emphasis – the budget and an education reform piece of legislation. I will use a future Log to discuss my education reform efforts before the final bill will be drafted and filed. The focus of my efforts is based on an overhaul of mid-level administration leadership preparation. I have researched and compiled resources and I am seeking expertise from many sources.

It seems that the major thrust of my session preparation always revolves around the health of the Missouri economy. My Appropriations for Ed-

ucation Committee is charged with passing HB2, the funding for K-12 schools, and HB3, Higher Education's budget. These two bills make up almost a third of Missouri's \$23B budget. Fiscal year 2013 that begins July 1, 2012 is shaping up as another challenging year.

Linda Luebbering, the state's Budget Director, recently released revenue collection numbers that reflect a mixed message. The general revenue for October is marginally lower than a year ago. So far, for this fiscal year the total collections are up from \$2.23B in FY 2010 to \$2.25B this year. Corporate tax collections are down 16.9% as of the end of October. Sales tax collections are up 14.6% from a year ago and individual income tax payments show a slight increase. I hope these last two figures mean that there are more people working and spending in the economy. As I stated, there is no clear picture of a trend for the state's economy as a whole. It is a moving target.

As we prepare to convene and begin work on the next budget, we must do so with an eye on all of these numbers as well as a myriad of additional factors. The national economy must be factored in, as well as the money sent from the feds to subsidize our administration of their programs. We must keep a sharp look out for unfunded mandates that seem to materialize from the national government in addition to federal regulatory changes that

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can severely affect our economy. As I have said many times, the budget is a process and anyone that claims to be able to give you accurate numbers at this point is hallucinating.

I was informed by David Kerr, Director of the Department of Economic Development that a block grant has been awarded to Livingston County to make access improvements to the courthouse. The Americans with Disabilities Act demands that specific architectural standards must be followed on any modification of an existing structure and this grant will help facilitate those modifications. Mr. Kerr stated that he wished to thank all those involved, “for their efforts to improve the quality of life in our county through the Community Development Block Grant Program.” I congratulate Livingston County and its disabled citizens.

We are one year away from the 2012 November elections. I am afraid that this election cycle will be dreadful. The 2008 presidential campaigns cost \$5.3 B and I have little doubt 2012 will top it. In Congress, the last three years have been filled by bitter partisan battles that have pushed the two sides further apart. The federal House will be a battleground with the GOP trying to keep and expand its majority. The U.S. Senate will see the Democrats try to cling to their six-seat majority, but that will be difficult with having to defend twenty-three seats to the Republican's ten. Senator McCaskill's race will be nationally significant. There are some “wild-cards” in this race that were not present in 2008. The *Tea Party* did not exist nor the new *Occupy Movements*.

On the state level, we will be voting for several statewide offices including governor, one-third of the state Senate, and all one hundred and sixty-three House seats. Political scientists and pollsters tell us that most voters in a national election make their decisions on information provided by TV ads. I am fearful that we are in for twelve months of attack ads, because it is easier to attack than to speak to issues and beliefs.

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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