



# Lair's Legislative Log...



REPRESENTATIVE MIKE LAIR—DISTRICT 7

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INFORMATION

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Last week your Missouri House of Representatives was chock-full of floor action, pomp and circumstance, and committee work. My office was a virtual traffic jam of visitors that were informative and loquacious. Each person or group regaled on the merits or short fallings of their particular piece of legislation. I most often use the Socratic Method of questioning, as I did in the classroom, to try to glean as much from them as I can and most of them react positively.

The floor action this week revolved around HJR43, also known as the Taxpayer Protection Bill. This bill allows the state budget to grow at the rate of inflation up to 1.5%. Should the state revenues grow faster than 1.5%, the remainder would be appropriated for debt reduction. The measure passed its final vote by a two-to-one margin. Should this resolution pass both the House and Senate, it will go on the ballot to be approved by Missouri voters. There are other provisions of this bill that can be read on my website. One of the points that sold me on it was that it would stop the “boom and bust” roller coaster of state budgets that expands state programs during good years and then forces restriction of state spending during years of fiscal challenge. We were told during debate that each General Assembly should make their own decisions and not be bound to the 1.5% expansion limit. I am afraid that from a historical perspective, that has not worked out. Both Republicans and Democrats have overreacted to years of plenty by over-

spending or expanding permanent programs. I believe that this is a first-rate piece of legislation. I enjoyed the Biblical references during debate from *Genesis 41, 34-36* to Egypt's Pharaoh accumulating grain in years of plenty to rescue the country during years of famine.

The pomp and circumstance last week was embodied by the State-of-the-State Speech and the State-of-the-Judiciary address held Tuesday and Wednesday. We must suspend the rules to allow the Senate, Supreme Court, and their staffs on to the floor of the House for the joint session. For the Governor's SOS speech the floor is packed, media all over the Gallery, and the Governor is announced by our Sergeant of Arms and escorted to the dais by selected members, five from each party. I was surprised by the announcement that I had been chosen to be one of the Republican escorts.

The Governor's speech has been well reported by the local media, so I will not belabor its content. It was the same “*smoke and mirrors*” that we have seen each of the previous three years. The address had a major impact upon my Appropriations – Education Committee work. As far as DESE K-12 funding goes, he said he was increasing funding. He added \$5M to the foundation formula while decreasing transportation funding by \$8M and the overall total was \$8M less. I have always been mathematically challenged, but I am still trying to see the overall increase in funding. The Higher Edu-

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education totals are much easier to understand. He cut Missouri's institutions of higher learning by 12.5% (\$106M), the same amount he wanted to borrow from them earlier this month.

Representatives of the colleges and universities have deluged me with visits and phone calls. At least five student newspapers have interviewed me. All asking the same question – how can we recoup these losses? I have answered the same each time: in the process of creating a balanced budget, we must decrease a budget line before we can increase another; my committee has only two departments under our jurisdiction, K-12 and Higher Education. *I will not take money from K-12 to give to Higher Education.* We will be done with our specific education budget work by mid-February; at that time, my bills and I will go to the full Budget Committee where the budgets from all departments of state government will be scrutinized. It is at this point that the Higher Education reductions could be addressed.

My committee took public testimony this week from: MOREnet, Parents as Teachers, Missouri Kidney Program, Teach for America, Missouri Association of Rehab Facilities, Sheltered Workshops, Missouri Library Association, Independent Universities and Colleges of Missouri, and the Missouri Coalition of School Administrators. This Wednesday, we will hear from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education when they offer their budget presentation.

Sophie and Gregg are in the process of tabulating the 7<sup>th</sup> District questionnaires that we mailed out to all registered voters several weeks ago. They

are being returned to us by the hundreds each day. If you did not receive one and would like to register your opinions on many of the issues that will be before the General Assembly this year, please call or email Gregg at the address below and we will send you one. For those of you who asked specific questions, I will get to them as soon as I can.

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

*Mike Lair*

