



Lair's Legislative Log...



REPRESENTATIVE MIKE LAIR—DISTRICT 7

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The wedges of geese that have traveled our skies for the past several weeks seem as confused by the weather as their human counterparts. They appear from every point on the compass and do not seem to have a definitive destination. There are times that the House must look that way...but not this week. Floor action has caught up with committee work as we enter week seven.

My committee schedule last week included Rules, Budget, Retirement, Special Standing Committee on Judicial Reform, and Appropriations – Education. We spent four hours in appropriations to ensure that I am able to report both HB 2002 (DESE) and HB2003 (Higher ED) to the full budget later this week. Tomorrow (Tuesday) we will go through the amendment process, as will all of the other appropriations committees. I anticipate a similar work schedule this week, with the addition of a bill presentation of HB 1175 before the Corrections Committee Wednesday night.

We hit full stride on the floor last week with the passage of several bills. Elections are the lifeblood of democracy, and the “*One Man, One Vote*” principle supporting our elections is protected in the Constitution to ensure that every vote counts. For these reasons, it is our duty here in the House to protect the integrity of our elections and the principles on which they are based. This week, we took a step toward this goal by passing HB 1104.

Voter fraud is not a mythical issue. The U.S. Supreme Court upheld Indiana’s Voter ID law, recognizing that flagrant examples of voter fraud are real and could affect the outcome of a close election. HB 1104 takes steps to protect the integrity of our elections by requiring voters to prove their identity. Critics of the bill argue that requiring voters to show a photo ID will suppress elderly, minority, and impoverished citizens, keeping them from the polls. They say that these groups are less likely to have photo identification, and it is more difficult for them to obtain it. In an effort to alleviate these concerns, HB 1104 allows all citizens to obtain a photo ID free of charge from the state or their local license bureau. Gregg, Sophie and I are not finished compiling the results of the 7th District questionnaire that I sent out late last fall, but the vast majority of our citizens favor requiring a photo ID to vote.

The following bills were also third read and passed: HB 1329 dealing with Department of Revenue and vehicle registration, HB 1311 encouraging data storage facilities to come to Missouri, and HB 1219 corrects inequities in employment practices and returns Missouri law to mirror the federal civil rights laws. Several consent bills were passed as well. A consent bill does not cost the state money, is not controversial, and carries no penalty. You can look at the full text of all of the bills on the House website www.house.mo.gov or my website www.RepMikeLair.com or call the

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office and we will mail you one.

I have written often about higher education in the last several epistles. Most of the discussion has been about funding, but there is another important piece to the puzzle, and that is evaluation. Evaluating a university is a difficult matter. Each institution has a different market share and vision. The Department of Higher Education has issued a final report of their *Higher Education Performance Funding Task Force* that will provide a performance-based funding system in the future. There are specific benchmarks for community colleges, vocational institutions, and our public four-year schools. The rubric contains measures that encompass all state-funded schools, but will have in place specific measures targeted for each institution as well. With taxpayer money as the reward, I hope all of our institutions maximize the value of the college education that they are offering Missouri's young people. If you wish to see a summary of the whole report, contact Gregg and he will see that you receive a copy.

Office visitors this week included Beth Young of Marceline representing the Association of School Librarians. Beth came to discuss issues affecting both public and school libraries. We deliberated upon the changing role of libraries from simply a book repository to a live and vibrant liaison to the cyber world. Brenda Wright, Livingston County Circuit Clerk, led a delegation of clerks and talked about common county concerns. Chelsea Sturgess, from the 7th District, visited about athletic trainers and an insurance issue.

Don Regan, Superintendent of Schools, of Braymer invited me to a dinner and presentation by the Missouri Association of School Administrators. The presentation included a new excellence in education intuitive called Vision Missouri created by MASA and a report from the Joplin School District on progress being made after the destruction wrought from last May's tornado.

The IRS contacted my office this week and asked me to share information on the Free Online Tax Assistance program. If your adjusted gross income is less than \$57,000, you may wish to visit their website, <http://www.irs.gov/freefile> and see if it would be of some help to you.

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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