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MO State Senator Doug Libla's Senate Report March 10, 2014

MARCH 10TH 2014 BY DEE LOFLIN

MO State Senator Doug Libla's Senate Report March 10, 2014

*Submitted by
Dee Loflin, SMT Manager/Editor*

This week, the Senate gave its final approval to my Senate Bill 530, advancing this important measure to the House of Representatives. This legislation provides incentives for parents whose children have been removed from their home because of their illegal drug use to seek out treatment in a timelier manner. My goal is to get drug-addicted parents the help they need to provide a safe, nurturing home for their children, or depending on their lack of commitment to a healthy family unit, not let their children languish in the foster care system. **SB 530** changes how parental rights are terminated by adding to the circumstances under which a parent is considered unfit. Currently, children removed because of parental drug use averages 15 months before a Petition to Terminate Parental Rights (TPR) is ordered by the court. When drugs are involved, most parents continue to test positive for drugs. Federal and state law intends to secure the permanent placement of a child as quickly as possible, through TPR or guardianship. This legislation speeds up the process of TPR for those parents who are irresponsible and deemed unfit by the court. This bill shortens the timeline deemed necessary for family intervention performed by social workers, eliminating years of children languishing in foster care. As children age, their

hopes and dreams of being adopted diminish.

History shows after one year of their children placed in state custody, less than 20 percent of these parents ordered into a drug treatment program actually enroll. Nationally, 75 percent of children who were removed because of parental drug abuse and placed in state custody, and later returned to the home for reunification, are returned back to state custody. This back and forth, plus months and years of uncertainty, is very difficult for these children.

Missouri now has more than 12,000 children in the foster system, at an annual expense of more than \$52 million for foster home care. In the last 36 months, money spent for foster care has increased over 40 percent. This does not include the expense of legal representation, court costs, health care, and many other expenses borne by counties.

These children's education is negatively affected when they are forced into moving in and out of different homes due to the lack of stability. This has to change, because children have rights, too! I look forward to my bill continuing through the legislative process as it moves to the House of Representatives. The Senate also began debate on legislation that would raise the cap on the amount of revenue bonds that may be issued and limit the use of funds to renovate existing state and public higher education buildings. **Senate Bill 723** puts the process in place for deferred maintenance for buildings, which could be of help to Three Rivers College. We have an obligation as a state to take care of these buildings. This is a fundamental responsibility that has been pushed down the line for years. We must remember to keep focus on the safety of the individuals who work in these buildings, and protect some of our state's largest investments.

Recently in Poplar Bluff, concerned citizens living along West Hwy. 160 met regarding the safety of new road improvements now being planned for construction. In attendance were Rep. Steve Cookson, the Butler County Commission, Butler County Clerk Tonyi Deffendall, and MoDOT District Engineer Mark Shelton. Many good ideas were discussed regarding motorist and homeowners' safety, and the price of their property they would receive for the right-of-way. I appreciated hearing the input from the citizens who are directly impacted.

Capitol Visitors

William "Wilson" McNeary IV of Charleston was among the selected students who visited Jefferson City this week to showcase their research during the University

of Missouri Undergraduate Research Day at the Capitol. Mr. McNeary displayed his exciting research going on at the University of Missouri, which focuses on an issue he's passionate about: ensuring quality sanitation facilities for the world's population. In addition, a lot of visitors from the 25th District made their way to the State Capitol this week, despite all the weather we had back home.

The Missouri Cattleman's Association met to discuss issues coming before the Senate Agriculture Committee.

I also met with Mississippi County Recorder of Deeds George Bays about different issues affecting our counties.

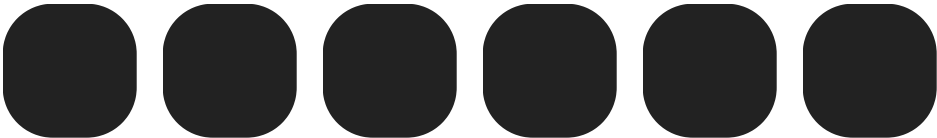
Jason Comfort and Zach Hedrick from Dexter, along with Ron Mattli from Wappapello, visited for the insurance agents' legislative advocacy day at the Capitol. Joetta Martin from Poplar Bluff also stopped by.

If you would like to read more about the legislation or committees mentioned in this column, visit www.senate.mo.gov/libla. Thank you for the opportunity to serve you.

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Kent Hampton's Capitol Report March 10, 2014

MARCH 10TH 2014 BY DEE LOFLIN

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*Submitted by
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As our world is divided on many items, one thing is for sure; we in the **Bootheel of Missouri** can all agree we have truly experienced winter. A week at a time of school closings, and a slow-down in the business environment, has been felt by many and made others home bound based on safety and accessibility concerns.

This last week in your Missouri house SB 668 which will make Missouri the 29th state to enact a **law to ensure cancer patients have affordable access to life-saving oral chemotherapy medications**. The Missouri House gave final approval this week to legislation that would eliminate the co-payment cost disparity that currently exists between orally and intravenously-administered chemotherapies.

Given the fact that orally-administered treatments are actually cheaper than those administered by IV, it is hard to rationalize how oral medications are far more costly for many patients here in Missouri. When you also factor in that many cancer treatments currently under development are oral in nature, it becomes even clearer that something must be done to ensure access to these treatments. The bill we passed this week will bring insurance coverage parity to both forms of chemotherapy – intravenous (IV) and pill form – by simply requiring plans that already cover traditional chemotherapies to also cover oral chemotherapy products.

This is a simple change that will have a huge impact on the lives of Missourians battling cancer who want nothing more than affordable access to these life-saving treatment options. We also know the requirement will not cause the cost of insurance premiums to increase significantly based on an actuarial study that was

done.

The bill now moves to the governor's desk where it will become law with his signature.

One of the bills approved by the House this week, HB 2014, would provide much-needed funding to our public education system. The supplemental budget bill addresses some of the funding shortfalls for various state services so that these programs can make it through the end of the fiscal year with adequate appropriations. While supplemental budget bills aren't always necessary, lower-than-expected revenues from the tax our state has on casinos has contributed to the need to shore up funding for our K-12 education system.

The bill we approved would dedicate another \$22 million in funding for the foundation formula that provides basic state aid to our schools. The bill also includes a \$5 million payment to the Normandy School District. As you may know, the district is currently unaccredited and teetering on the edge of insolvency because of a state law that requires the district to pay for students who transfer to neighboring districts. The additional funds will help the district to make it through the school year.

The bill now moves to the Senate for consideration.

Missouri's System of Education to Receive Funding Boost under Spending Plan
Introduced by House Budget Chairman Rick Stream

Also this week, House Budget Chairman Rick Stream unveiled a proposed spending plan that would take funding for K-12 education to record levels, provide a significant funding boost to all public universities and community colleges, and dramatically increase financial assistance to Missouri students who seek a college education in the state.

The spending plan introduced in the House includes a \$278 million increase for the school foundation formula, which would make the K-12 education budget the largest in state history. Under the plan, \$122 million of the increase would come from General Revenue with another \$156 million from a Surplus Revenue Fund that will be created to hold any revenues above the estimates agreed upon by the House and Senate. Monies placed in the fund would have to be used for education and one-time projects.

The plan also calls for a 2 percent increase in core funding for every public university and community college in the state, and another \$10 million in equity funding for community colleges. In addition, it includes approximately \$63 million in funding for the backlog of capital improvement projects at higher education institutions around the state.

The House Budget Committee is expected to consider the appropriations bills this week and next. The goal is to have the bills to the House floor for discussion the week after the Legislative Spring Break, which runs from Mar. 13 – 24.

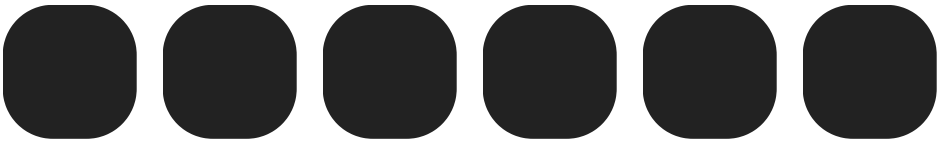
As we have moved our clocks forward for day light savings time, our thoughts about outdoor activities increases with anticipation. Start out slow, think of your body as an engine, it needs to warm up before getting up to speed.

As always, it is an honor to serve you in the Missouri House. If you would like to discuss any issue, please call 573-751-3629. You can also email me at kent.hampton@house.mo.gov . I look forward to hearing from you.

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Tila Rowland-Hubrecht Files for State Representative in 151st District

MARCH 05TH 2014 BY DEE LOFLIN

Tila Rowland-Hubrecht Files for State Representative in 151st District

*Submitted by
Dee Loflin, SMT Manager/Editor*

Dexter, Missouri - With an agenda of cutting taxes and reducing spending, Tila (Rowland) Hubrecht officially filed papers with the Secretary of State's Office today announcing she will be a candidate for State Representative. Her trip to Jefferson City was unique because she has already been nominated by the 151st legislative committee to run as the Republican nominee in the special election, but she also filed to run as a republican in the regular 2014 election.

Because of the special election voters will have the chance to vote for Tila twice in August, once in the regular primary and once in the special election. The last time this happed was when JoAnn Emerson ran in the special to replace her husband; Congressman Bill Emerson and voters had the opportunity to vote for JoAnn twice that day.

After the resignation of Representative Fowler, Tila was approached by several community leaders urging her to run for representative. Since that time she has been actively meeting with residents and today was the first day for candidates to file. Tila said, "I have met with hundreds of voters around the district and my message of cutting taxes, reducing regulations, protecting life and defending the Second Amendment have been well received. I was humbled to have so many supporters attend my kickoff rally and wish me well before I headed to Jefferson City Monday night.

Tila is a Stoddard County native and has been involved in the Republican Party her whole life. She graduated from Richland High School and went to college at Southeast Missouri State University. After college, Tila spent eight years as a

teacher in our public schools with six of those in the Bloomfield School District. After teaching Tila moved into the healthcare field which helped her gain a better understanding of government programs such as Medicare and Medicaid.

Bob Thrower who ran for representative in 2012 said, "Having someone like Tila who has been a teacher and nurse, who raised her family here in Stoddard County, is a perfect background to represent our community. She shares our conservative values and I know Tila will work to help our local farmers and businesses, while voting to protect life and defend the Second Amendment."

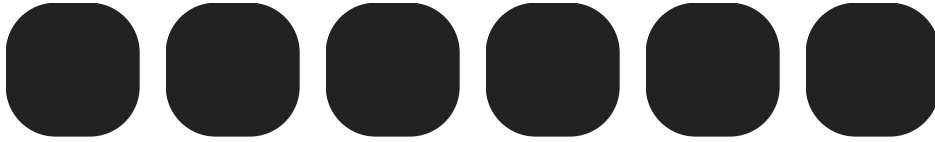
She first became interested in politics while working as a volunteer on Congressman Bill Emerson's campaigns in the nineties. When asked why she decided to run for State Representative Tila commented, "I am very concerned about the direction of our state. I want to help find waste in some of the big government programs and make them more efficient. I believe my background in education as well as healthcare will allow me to implement reforms that will return local control of our schools and give patients more choices"

Tila has raised just over \$10,000 since beginning her campaign which shows strong support so early in this race. "It's going to take close to 68,000 to run a winning campaign but I am extremely thankful to all those who have already contributed. As we tell folks about the issues we are fighting for they are very willing to not only donate their money, but their time and talent as well," Tila remarked.

Barb Myers, a local resident added, "Tila is a committed conservative who shares our values. We need principled leaders who will go to Jefferson City and stand up for what we believe and I know Tila will be fighting for us from day one."

Her family currently attends Sweet Prospect Baptist Church and before that were members of Frist Baptist in Dexter, Missouri. Tila has also been an active member in the Civil Air Patrol unit based in Malden. She is married to Bryan Hubrecht, a retired veteran of the Army who served in Afghanistan and together they are raising two daughters who attend Dexter High School. She concluded by saying, "I am thankful to have the support of my family in this effort and I look forward to visiting with all the voters in the 151st district as we work together to make southeast Missouri a better place to live, work and raise our families."

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Kent Hampton's Capitol Report March 4, 2014

MARCH 05TH 2014 BY DEE LOFLIN

Kent Hampton's Capitol Report March 4, 2014

*Submitted by
Dee Loflin, SMT Manager/Editor*

What I hope to say is the final winter storm of 2014, brought a smorgasbord of all ingredients; freezing rain, and sleet followed by snow. Folks took warning to stay in and off the roads, with the hope that their power would remain on. I appreciate all of our electrical crews out in the elements to ensure folks could stay warm during bitter cold.

This week in your Missouri House we approved HB 1268 by the Missouri House this week our state income tax brackets would be adjusted for the first time in decades. It may be hard to believe but Missouri's top income bracket has been set at \$9,000 for more than 80 years. While that was a good income at the time at

the time it was set in 1931, today it is a figure that falls below the federal poverty level. If the rate had been adjusted for inflation over the years it would today check in at \$137,000. The difference means that most Missourians see the bulk of their income taxed at the top rate despite the fact that bracket was meant to apply to those who are wealthy.

The bill we passed this week would require our tax brackets to be adjusted each year for inflation beginning in 2015. While this wouldn't push our top bracket to where it would be had we done this all along, it will begin the process of moving our brackets in a direction that better reflects the current day income levels. This is a change that would ultimately result in a reduced tax burden for low income Missourians. Our researchers estimate it could reduce the tax burden by as much as \$26 million when fully implemented.

The bill now heads to the House Senate for consideration. In the coming weeks we will see what our Senate colleagues think of this new approach to adjusting our tax brackets.

House Members Approve Voter ID Legislation (HJR 47 and HB 1073)

approved by the House this week generated a considerable amount of discussion and disagreement. The bills – one a proposed constitutional amendment and the other a statutory change – would put in place a requirement that voters must show photo identification before casting their ballots.

On one side of this issue you have proponents who say a photo ID requirement is the best way to protect and preserve the integrity of the voting process. They say the current system makes it too easy for fraudulent votes to be cast and that it is not too much to ask for voters to prove who they say they are at the polling place. Opponents of a voter ID requirement say there is no need for a change to the current system because there are no documented cases of voter fraud. They also say a photo ID requirement is nothing more than a way to disenfranchise voters who don't have the means to obtain identification.

This is a debate that has waged on for years as the legislature has revisited this topic numerous times. A voter ID bill was actually signed into law in 2006 but ultimately was struck down by the Missouri Supreme Court. This year's plan would first give voters the opportunity to change the Missouri Constitution to allow a system of voter identification before then putting it into place with the statutory change.

To remove some of the concerns of opponents, the bill also provides individuals without a government-issued photo ID with access to one free of charge. To prevent the requirement from being a barrier to those who cannot obtain an ID and those born before 1941 who may not have documentation such as a birth certificate, the bill would allow these Missourians to vote by provisional ballot. However, even with the provisions in place, opponents point to a statistic provided by the Missouri Secretary of State's office that estimates 220,000 people would not be able to vote if a photo identification requirement is put into place.

Going forward this will be an interesting issue to follow. A similar plan was approved by the House last year but ultimately died in the Senate. Already this year a Senate committee has considered similar legislation but the issue has yet to come to a vote.

HB 1092 also acted to approve legislation that would give investigators additional time to thoroughly review cases of child abuse. Right now our Children's Division has 30 calendar days to complete an investigation, which can involve numerous interviews and a large amount of review of testimony and paperwork. These are investigations we want to be conducted in a thorough manner to ensure any evidence of abuse or neglect is uncovered.

Because many of our investigators are overwhelmed with a high volume of cases, it makes sense to give them a few extra days that can mean the difference in uncovering all of the facts before a case is closed. The bill we passed would allow investigators to have 30 business days to complete their work. This small but important change could lead to investigators having as much as an additional week to investigate these cases. Hopefully these additional days will allow the state to better protect all of the young people who have been subjected to dangerous situations in the home.

Also this last week a shout out goes to the Clarkton Reindeer basketball team. Winners of the 1A district regional against the Risco Tigers. A great game between two good teams. I must compliment the spirit and sportsmanship displayed by both teams. Clarkton now moves to play its next game in Bloomfield. Good luck, Reindeer's!

As always, it is an honor to serve you in the Missouri House. If you would like to discuss any issue, please call 573-751-3629. You can also email me at kent.hampton@house.mo.gov . I look forward to hearing from you.

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Jason Smith Files for Reelection

FEBRUARY 27TH 2014 BY DEE LOFLIN

Jason Smith Files for Reelection

*Submitted by
Dee Loflin, SMT Manager/Editor*

Jefferson City, Missouri - Today, February 25, 2014, Congressman Jason Smith filed to run for reelection to the United States House of Representatives from Missouri's Eighth Congressional District. Smith released the following statement after filing:

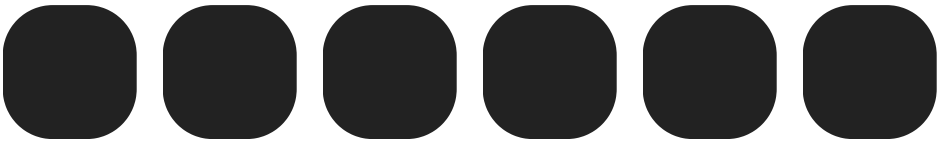
"It's a great honor to represent my friends and neighbors in Missouri's Eighth Congressional District in the halls of Congress. These past nine months I have fought the Obama Administration's war on rural Missouri and I plan to keep up the fight. President

Obama seems determined to regulate everything from how we generate power in rural Missouri to our ability to use rivers for Baptism services. I am committed to being a strong voice for a smaller, more efficient federal government, and an advocate for our region’s rural way of life.”

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