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Tila Hubrecht's Capitol Report - February 27, 2015

MARCH 01ST 2015 BY DEE LOFLIN

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Dear 151st District Constituents,

It is with a heavy heart that I write this week's Capitol Report. The passing of our State Auditor, Tom Schweich, came as a shock. Auditor Schweich was a gifted and brilliant man with an impressive resume. His talent was phenomenal. I can only imagine the heartache and sorrow that his family must be going through right now. I ask you all to please remember them in your prayers during the next several months as they attempt to cope with this huge loss and void now present in their lives. Auditor Schweich devoted his life to public service and to making the world a better place for the next generation, I hope we will all devote ourselves to the same.

I have listed below information related to the legislation that was addressed in the house this week. If you have questions, concerns, thoughts on any legislation listed below or upcoming, please contact my office via e-mail or phone. We will get back with you as quickly as possible.

Until next week,

Tila

House Approves School Transfer Bill (HB 42)

This week the House took action to address one of the most important issues we will discuss this year, or any year. Right now we have thousands of children in failing schools who are not receiving the educational experience they need and deserve. In an effort to give these young people the option to obtain a top notch education, we passed legislation this week that will modify our existing school transfer law to give students and parents more choices in regard to where they can go to school.

Our current transfer law has caused a great deal of hardship for schools in both failing districts, as well as those that neighbor these areas. The issue is that the failing districts have to pay the cost associated with students transferring to nearby districts, and also that schools receiving these kids

may not have the classroom space or faculty to accommodate the influx of students. The issues that have arisen from the current law that was put in place in 1993 have emphasized the need for reforms that will put the interests of our young people first without bankrupting school districts that are struggling to stay afloat.

The bill passed this week represents a complex but common sense solution to this pressing problem. One of the key components of the bill would allow students in failing schools to move to better performing schools in their current district. The goal with this is to allow kids to stay closer to home while also keeping down costly transportation expenses. In the event space can't be found in a good school in the district, students would be allowed to transfer to neighboring districts, or possibly attend a charter school or take advantage of a virtual school option.

These are just a few components to what is a complicated but crucial fix to the glaring problem we currently have with our student transfer law. We know going forward there will be a great deal of discussion with our counterparts from the Senate, who also approved their own version of a fix this week. While the scope of the bill may change as the session progresses, we know the underlying purpose will remain the same – to give the young people of our state a world class education that will prepare them for success as adults. I look forward to working with my colleagues to make sure we take an important step toward accomplishing that goal this year.

House Moves to Extend Big Government Get Off My Back Act (HB 32)

My colleagues and I took action this week to continue a program that has helped nearly 200 small businesses here in Missouri. The Big Government Get Off My Back Act has been in effect for several years now and has bolstered small business growth by providing a tax deduction to small employers who create good-paying jobs.

Specifically, the bill allows a \$10,000 tax deduction for each full-time job a business with fewer than 50 employees creates that matches the county's average wage. The act doubles the deduction for employers who offer new employee health insurance and pay at least 50 percent of the premiums. The provisions of the bill previously applied through 2014, but with the passage of HB 32 we would extend them through the 2019 tax year.

The bill now moves to the Senate where we hope our counterparts will take quick action to approve this measure that will help the many small employers who represent such a vital part of our state's economic engine.

Prescription Drug Monitoring Program Receives House Approval (HB 130)

The House engaged in spirited debate this week as we considered a bill to put a prescription drug monitoring program in place. Missouri is the only state in the nation that does not have such a system in place already, and advocates for the issue say it is time to change that distinction.

The goal with the database is to provide doctors and pharmacies with a powerful tool to prevent the abuse of prescription medications, and to protect patients from having conflicting medications prescribed by the various physicians they may see. During discussion on the floor, one of my colleagues described how her sister passed away from an overdose that was the result of conflicting medications. It was a powerful and emotional reminder that such a program has the potential to save lives.

Those of my colleagues who took issue with the idea focused their comments solely on the need to protect the private information of Missouri citizens. They pointed to database breaches that

have occurred with major companies as examples of cautionary tales for what could happen if Missouri has a central information storage bank for patients.

Despite some of the concerns raised, we approved the proposal and sent it to the Senate. We will now wait to see if the measure can gain traction in the other chamber. In past years similar measures have died in the Senate.

Requiring Additional Safety Standards for Clinics that Provide Abortions (HB 190)

The House also approved legislation this week designed to improve the safety at Missouri's only clinic that provides abortions. The bill was filed by one of my colleagues who was concerned by a recent inspect that found multiple violations. While those issues were corrected, the concern is that the facility is not inspected frequently enough to ensure it is maintaining adequate health standards.

The bill we passed this week simply says the facility must be inspected no less than once per year. Currently, the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services is required to inspect ambulatory surgical centers only as it deems necessary. By requiring at least an annual inspection we hope to better protect the health and well-being of the women who use the Planned Parenthood facility in St. Louis.

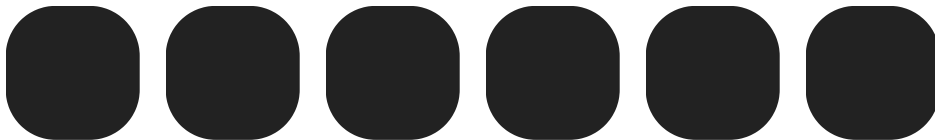
House Approves Emergency Funding (HB 16)

Also this week, we approved legislation to ensure communities in our state ravaged by natural disasters will receive the funding they need to pay for storm shelters and repairs. To date we have seen \$30 million in projects completed around the state, but the funds to reimburse these communities have been depleted. With the bill we passed this week, we have taken the first step toward releasing the funds necessary to help these communities to pay for their repair projects.

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