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Tila Hubrecht's Capitol Report - March 6, 2015

MARCH 09TH 2015 BY DEE LOFLIN

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151st District, Missouri - Let it Not snow! Let it Not snow! Let it Not snow! Winter is going out roaring like a Lion but thankfully the forecast is warming up! We are also warming up and moving a lot of legislation for the State of Missouri. Committee work is in full swing. We are hearing several bills on the House floor and sending some over to the Senate. Next week will be budget bills. I expect floor debate will be lively. My first bill HB 705 will be heard this next week in Committee on Health and Mental Health Policy. It deals with MO HealthNet managed care organizations; to allow eligible recipients to combine all available healthy behavior incentives toward the purchase of certain categories of infant and childcare items such as car seats and other safety items.

Twice this week, our session schedule was changed. Monday, many legislators and I went to Fort Leonard Wood, to show support for the base as the Army had officials at a hearing post on the future of the fort. Missouri had a huge presence in elected officials, Governor Nixon, Senators Claire McCaskill, Roy Blunt, Congresswoman Vicki Hartzler, and almost 80 of my colleagues in the Missouri House and Senate were in attendance. I will add that when the community made its case to keep the fort they talked about things to do in Missouri and how the base is capable of expanding to meet whatever need the military may have. Every community in Missouri will be effected if we lose Fort Leonard Wood. We must support a strong military and keep our training facilities in place. We must send a strong message to Washington!

I'm proud of my colleagues for taking a stand in support of the men and women of our Armed Forces. Right now, Fort Leonard Wood is facing the threat of losing 5,400 jobs at the base. The proposed cuts are part of the federal government's efforts to cut the military workforce by 14 percent. While we understand the need for the budget reductions, we also know such a drastic cut to the workforce would be extremely harmful to the communities around Fort Leonard Wood, and to our state's economy. In the weeks and months to come I know we will continue to see the state's leaders work together to do all we can to save these jobs. The thousands of folks who turned out for the listening post this week are testimony to the importance of the base to the surrounding communities and our state. My hope is that we can save these jobs and prevent the

devastating impact the cuts would have on Missouri families.

On Tuesday, Auditor Tom Schweich was laid to rest. From our Speaker of the House, John Diehl came these words, "It was with immense sadness that I learned of the tragic passing of our fellow public servant, Tom Schweich. This is a devastating loss for our state as we have now lost a leader and a man of the highest integrity, character and dedication." I would ask all Missourians to pray for the Schweich family as they cope with this terrible outcome.

Even though many things in life happen that we do not understand we must be moved by our willingness to overcome all obstacles. No matter what you are going through you can overcome! I will do everything I can to stand for our great District 151 and unite us with our fellow Districts and continue to push forward this Session what is good for our community. We have a very busy week ahead!

Until next week,

Tila

Capitol News:

Medical Malpractice Reform Bill Receives House Approval (HB 118) - The House moved this week to approve a plan designed to contain ever-escalating medical costs and to keep medical professionals from fleeing our state. The legislation would limit the amount an individual can receive for noneconomic damages in a medical malpractice lawsuit. In effect, it would reinstate the limits that were put in place in 2005 that were then struck down in 2012 by the Missouri Supreme Court, which ruled that a cap on noneconomic damages violates the constitutional right to a jury trial.

Supporters say putting the caps back in place is a necessary step to limit the cost of medical malpractice insurance for physicians. They say keeping costs down is vital to efforts to prevent doctors from leaving Missouri for other states with reasonable limits in place. They also point to the fact the bill would limit only noneconomic damages such as pain and suffering, and not the amount an individual can receive for medical costs or lost wages. The bill approved this week would put in place a \$350,000 limit on noneconomic damages in medical malpractice cases. This is the same limit that existed under the law that was put into place in 2005. Before that change, Missouri had a cap of \$579,000 for noneconomic damages.

House Approves Tax Amnesty Legislation (HB 384)

This week the House passed legislation that could generate as much as an additional \$75 million in revenue for the state budget. These are additional funds that can help to fund vital programs and services that otherwise could be looked at for cuts.

The additional dollars would be generated by a period of tax amnesty that will allow delinquent taxpayers to forego all penalties, additions to tax, and interest on their unpaid taxes if they pay in full. The state has previously authorized tax amnesty periods that brought in approximately \$74 million for fiscal year 2002 and \$42 million for fiscal year 2003. It's important to note that anyone who makes use of the forgiveness procedures must agree to comply with tax laws and cannot use the same amnesty procedure again in future years.

Reducing the Bureaucratic Red Tape for Missouri Businesses (HB 513)

The House also passed legislation this week to make Missouri friendlier to businesses of all sizes. The legislation would reduce the filing fees for businesses throughout Missouri, and make Missouri the state with the lowest business fees in the nation.

Right now, filing fees can vary based on the type of business entity and the type of work being performed. The bill we approved reduces all of the fees and makes them streamlined to \$5 on business filings. These dollars go to the technology trust fund that pays for our state's new online filing system.

One thing we know from talking to businesses all around the state is that they find all of the bureaucratic red tape to be confusing and a substantial obstacle. By cutting some of this tape we can get government even more out of the way so that businesses can freely grow and prosper.

Protecting Missouri's Health Care Workforce (HB 112) - Another piece of legislation passed this week would give Missouri the accurate data it needs to allocate resources and make decisions that will ensure we have a strong health care workforce in the future. While it is a surprise to some, the truth is that Missouri does not have reliable information that will allow us to have relevant discussions about how to grow and retain our workforce of health care professionals.

Missouri is blessed to have six medical schools in our state and we produce a large number of doctors, but from what we know it appears we have not done a good job of keeping many of them in the state. The bill we passed this week will allow our state boards that deal with our medical professions to work together to better collect the data they need. We know that better information will allow the state to make better decisions that address the actual needs of Missourians and the health care professionals who treat them.

Honoring a Great Public Servant (HR 659) - Also this week many of my colleagues made the trip from Jefferson City to Clayton to pay their respects to State Auditor Tom Schweich, who tragically passed away last week. It was a somber and emotional moment as we remembered this man who had worked so hard for our state, and who had such a bright future of service ahead of him. Upon returning to the Capitol, the House met to approve a resolution honoring and memorializing Schweich. As the resolution said, "Schweich's professionalism, passion for civil service, and relentless defense against corruption, waste, and abuse serve as a standard for us all." I know I speak for all of my colleagues in the legislature when I say Schweich was a great public servant who will be dearly missed by both Republicans and Democrats.

Sales Tax Exemption on Manufactured Homes (HB 111) - Bill excludes used manufactured homes from sales and use taxes—which protects young families, seniors, and individuals with low incomes from the burden of sales taxes. Third read and passed by a bipartisan majority (132-17).

Missouri Health Care Workforce Data (HB 112) - Authorizes the boards responsible for monitoring / licensing health care providers to enter into agreements with DHSS, a public institution of higher education, or a nonprofit entity to collect and analyze health care workforce data. Creating this kind of data set will allow the state to better allocate resources for training, education, and investing in growing our health care workforce. Third read and passed by a bipartisan majority (142-10)

Audits on Transportation Development Districts (HB777) - Requires the State Auditor to report to DOR any Transportation Development District that fails to timely submit its annual financial statement—penalty is \$500/day (which will be distributed to schools located in the county). It was third read and passed by a bipartisan majority (146-4)

Kansas City Jobs Tax Credit (HB468) - This bill extends a tax credit for development at the Burns and McDonnell headquarters in Kansas City; Burns and McDonnell has generated thousands of jobs in the Kansas City area and is a major target for financial incentives from the State of Kansas. It was third read and passed by a bipartisan majority (106-48)

Missouri's Position on EPA Regulatory Changes (HCR 32) - Expresses to the EPA that Missouri utility customers would be detrimentally affected by the EPA's proposed regulatory changes. Third read and passed by a bipartisan majority (120-37)

Missouri Lead Industry (SCR 5) - Establishes the Missouri Lead Industry Employment, Economic Development, and Environmental Remediation Task Force. Missouri is America's only reliable source of lead, a vital, strategic mineral. Third read and passed by a bipartisan majority (145-12)

Logging and Agriculture Distribution (HB 388) - Increases the allowable weight of trucks carrying agricultural products. Increases the maximum distance trucks carrying forest products may travel. Third read and passed by a bipartisan majority (140-16)

Boat Liquor Licenses (HB 149) - reduces the number of passengers necessary to apply for a boat liquor license from 100 to

30 passengers. Third read and passed by a bipartisan majority (130-22)

Organ Donor Recognition (HB 88) - Designates July 3rd as "Organ Donor Recognition Day". Third read and passed by a unanimous, bipartisan majority (147-0)

Engineer Awareness (HB 361) - Designates the third week of February as "Engineer Awareness Week". Third read and passed by a bipartisan majority (145-2)

Auto Insurance Cancellation Notices (HB391) - Requires any insurer canceling, refusing to renew, or refusing to write a policy of auto insurance to send written notice by USPS first class mail with intelligent mail barcode. Third read and passed by a bipartisan majority (147-3)

Epilepsy Awareness (HB400) - Designates November as "Epilepsy Awareness Month". Third read and passed by a unanimous, bipartisan majority (146-0)

Boating Safety (HB 402) - Designates the first full week of May before Memorial Day as "Missouri Safe Boating Week". Third read and passed by a bipartisan majority (148-1)

Peace Officers Memorial (HB 404) - Designates the week of Memorial Day as "Missouri Peace Officers Memorial Week". Third read and passed by a unanimous, bipartisan majority (148-0)

Autocycles (HB562) - Opens up Missouri roads to this newer, safer, low-cost form of transportation. Third read and passed by a bipartisan majority (133-15)

School Funding Formula (HB 41) - Removes provisions of the law regarding the school funding formula that are obsolete. Third read and passed by a bipartisan majority (149-2)

Candidate Placeholders (HB 179) - changes filing procedures so that in the event a candidate withdraws within two days of the filing deadline, that filing will close — allowing the public time to note the change — and then filing will reopen for the following week to allow more candidates to enter the race if they so choose. Third read and passed by a bipartisan majority (150-4)

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