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Happenings at the Missouri State Capitol by Tila Hubrecht

MARCH 04TH 2017 BY DEE LOFLIN

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Helping Missouri Small Businesses Grow

The Missouri House recently approved legislation that would provide a boost to the state's small businesses, including many in rural areas. House members voted in favor of a bill that would expand the Missouri Works program so that more of the state's small businesses would be eligible for workforce training benefits.

The sponsor of the bill noted that in many areas of the state there are small businesses that do not qualify to obtain the benefits provided through Missouri Works. These businesses fall short of the program's qualification criteria such as number of workers employed, or health insurance benefits provided. The bill approved this week would allow these businesses to pool together with businesses that do meet all of the program's criteria in order to receive benefits. Specifically, the bill would allow a group of businesses to qualify as long as the majority of them meet the program's criteria.

The Missouri Works program, which was created by the legislature in 2013, is the state's number one incentive tool for expansion and retention. The program helps businesses access capital through withholdings or tax credits to embark on facility expansions and create jobs. It works to assist companies with the training of employees in new jobs and the retraining or upgrading of the skills of full-time employees in retained jobs.

Supporters of HB 93 say the bill will help more small businesses take advantage of the Missouri Works program. The change will give the department more flexibility to distribute the program's benefits throughout the state.

Preparing Students for the Workforce

The members of the Missouri House approved legislation this week to give students a more direct path to the workforce. The bill approved by the House would provide students with the option to obtain ACT National Career Readiness Certification. The certification is meant to demonstrate the individual has essential, verifiable workplace skills.

As the sponsor of the bill told her colleagues on the House floor, many students take the traditional ACT test and then end up not going to college. By making the National Career Readiness Certification an option, legislators hope to give Missourians the ability to document their essential job skills, while also giving employers a helping hand in identifying capable workers.

Right now Missouri has 84 counties that participate in the Certified Work Ready Communities program that is designed to attract, retain, and develop a workforce with the education and fundamental skills to succeed in the 21st century. More than 3,300 businesses across the state participate in the program and are ready to hire employees with National Career Readiness Certification.

House Approves Bill to Continue Support for Pregnancy Resource Centers

The Missouri House took action this week to continue a tax credit program that helps secure funding for pregnancy resource centers and maternity homes in the state. Supporters say the tax credits encourage investment in programs that benefit many of Missouri's most vulnerable citizens.

Under current law, the tax credit for donations to maternity homes is set to expire June 30, 2020. The tax credit for donations to pregnancy resource centers expires December 31, 2019. The legislation approved by the House would extend the sunset for both credits to 2023. There are \$2.5 million in credits available each year for pregnancy resource centers. Each credit requires a minimum contribution of \$100, of which 50 percent is tax-credit-eligible. Donors can claim up to a \$50,000 credit per tax year. The maternity home tax credit works in similar fashion.

There are currently 69 pregnancy resource centers in Missouri that benefit from the tax

credits. The centers provide assistance to women with crisis pregnancies or unplanned pregnancies by offering pregnancy testing, counseling, emotional and material support, and other similar services to encourage and assist such women in carrying their pregnancies to term. The state currently has 17 qualified maternity homes, which are residential facilities established for the purpose of providing housing and assistance to pregnant women who are carrying their pregnancies to term.

House Members Urge the United States Senate to Confirm Judge Neil Gorsuch as United States Supreme Court Justice

Members of the Missouri House took action this week to urge the United States Senate to confirm Judge Neil M. Gorsuch as a United States Supreme Court Justice. The House approved a resolution supporting Gorsuch, who was nominated by President Trump and currently serves as a judge on the United States Court of Appeals for the Tenth Circuit.

The resolution notes that Gorsuch is an outstanding jurist with a commitment to upholding the United States Constitution and the rule of law. It also points out that he respects the role state government has and he consistently defends the constitutional rights to freedom of speech and religion and the right to bear arms. In passing the resolution, House members also praised Gorsuch for being a constitutional scholar, who will ensure the three branches of government act within the roles assigned to them by the United States Constitution.

Gorsuch's confirmation hearing in the Senate is scheduled for March 20.

House Speaker Forms New Committees to Examine Issues Ranging from Student Debt Relief to the Tax Burden on Working Families

In recent weeks the Speaker of the Missouri House of Representatives has formed several special and sub committees to address issues ranging from student debt relief to agricultural education to the tax burden on working families.

The House Special Committee on Tax Policy for Working Families will take a closer look at legislation that could reduce the tax burden for Missouri families. One bill the committee is expected to review and discuss thoroughly is a state earned income tax credit. The House approved an earned income tax credit during the 2016 legislative session, but the bill failed to make it through the Senate. Legislators are again proposing legislation this year that would authorize a state individual income tax credit equal to 20 percent of any federal earned income tax credit claimed by the taxpayer. If approved this

year, the legislation could provide meaningful tax relief to more than a quarter million working Missourians.

The House Subcommittee on Agriculture Education will look at ways to bolster agriculture education in Missouri. The House Speaker and the chair of the House Agriculture Committee formed the subcommittee to look at ways to encourage more young people to pursue fields in the agriculture industry. The state currently has a shortage of young farmers with the majority of farmers falling in the age groups of 45-54 and 70 plus. More than 28,000 students are enrolled in agriculture education programs, but legislators hope to find ways to encourage even more young people to pursue careers in agriculture.

The House Subcommittee on Student Debt Relief will review legislation that could help Missouri students more easily repay their college loan debt. The committee is expected to review legislative measures such as the "Student Debt Relief Act" that would enable the Department of Higher Education to refinance student loans through consolidation. The legislation is meant to reduce interest rates, extend repayment periods, and enact a cap for monthly payments proportional to each graduate's amount of discretionary income.

Ensuring Students Gain Skills in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Fields

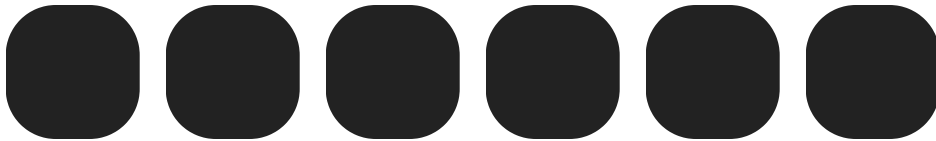
On Thursday the Missouri State Capitol was filled with students and education supporters who made the trip to Jefferson City to observe the state's annual STEM day. The day is meant to highlight the important roles STEM education plays in the state's economy and the opportunities it provides to students. The day was highlighted by various hands-on technology displays, including an F-18 flight simulator provided by the Boeing Company. Students also competed for the Capitol Cup in the first Lego League Robotics Challenge. The event is hosted each year by the Missouri Chamber Foundation's Mathematics and Science Coalition. The coalition is a group of business, education, government and community stakeholders who have come together to foster collaboration to ensure Missouri citizens are equipped with knowledge and skills in mathematics, engineering, technology and science to prosper in a global economy.

In the coming weeks, the House is set to discuss legislation that would raise awareness of the need for young people to pursue STEM careers. The bill (HB 248) would require the Department of Economic Development to establish a statewide, online program for middle schools designed to promote careers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

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Representative Tila Hubrecht's Capitol Report - Friday, March 3, 2017

MARCH 04TH 2017 BY DEE LOFLIN

Representative Tila Hubrecht's Capitol Report - Friday, March 3, 2017

Hello All!

I am so thankful you take time to read this report! I cannot tell you how much I appreciate the time you take from your very busy schedule!

Budget work has taken the bulk of the time and focus this week. This week in budget

committee we finished hearing presentation requests from the various state departments. We are now in the what is called the “mark-up” process. During this process the subcommittees of the various appropriations, make changes to the bills assigned to their subcommittee. We should have that process completed during next week and then we will begin meeting as a full budget committee to make further changes among all the bills. I am looking (and think I may have found) for money, approximately \$500,000 for a Foster/Adoptive Resource Center for Southeast Missouri. (Just a note of information here, every other part of the state has one of these centers, except Southeast Missouri!) I am looking forward to making that change as soon as the full budget committee meets and am going to work hard to see that it stays in through the entire process. I have already started speaking to the Governor’s office about this need as well. I will keep you posted on the success of this project!

This week I also was able to present the topic of Advanced Practice Registered Nurses to a subcommittee of Professional Registration. I discussed with the subcommittee the current health status and outcomes of Missourians, some of which are absolutely terrible. For example, Southeast Missouri has an infant mortality of 8.6%, the highest in MO and higher than some third world countries! Missouri is also 36th in the nation in health (out of 50, with 50 being the worst), 41st in Cardiovascular health, 46th in Immunization Coverage, 39th in Cancer Deaths, 23rd in Low Birth Weight Babies, and the list goes on. Missouri is not towards the top in anything. I feel strongly that removing barriers of practice to Advanced Practice Registered Nurses and allowing them to work to the fullest extent of their education and training will allow them to partner more closely with physicians and other healthcare providers in improving these outcomes and the status of Missourian’s health.

I heard strong storms came through the Bootheel this week and some of our area did sustain damages. If you or someone you know has sustained damages, please call my office if we can be of help. My office number is 573 751 1494.

Have a wonderful weekend!
Until next week,
Tila

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Missouri House Members to Honor Missouri's Vietnam Veterans

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House Members to Honor Missouri's Vietnam Veterans

In anticipation of the state's annual Vietnam Veterans Day on March 30, House members are encouraging veterans throughout the state to come forward to receive recognition for their service. As part of the annual celebration, Vietnam veterans will be honored at the State Capitol in the House Chamber by the Speaker of the House and the members of the House of Representatives. Each veteran will also receive an official House Resolution in honor of the service they provided to the nation.

Vietnam Veterans Day was created by the General Assembly with the passage of HB 1128 in 2012. The day, which is scheduled for March 30, is meant to recognize the courage and patriotism of those who served during the Vietnam Conflict. During the day, Missourians are encouraged to hold events, activities, and remembrances in honor of the veterans who bravely fought, served, and sacrificed during the Vietnam Conflict and returned home to no parades, ceremonies, or public celebrations to welcome them in gratitude for their courageous service given and sacrifices made on behalf of our nation.

If you or someone you know would like to be recognized, please contact my legislative assistant office via email at deborah.huebert@house.mo.gov or call 573-751-1494.

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House Approves Unemployment System Reforms (HB 288)

The Missouri House recently approved legislation meant to keep the state's system of unemployment financially stable. The bill would link unemployment benefits to the rate of unemployment, and ensure the state keeps more money in the unemployment trust fund.

The bill is identical to legislation that was put into law in 2015. After being approved by

the House and Senate, the bill was vetoed by Governor Jay Nixon. The House then took immediate action to override the governor's veto. The Senate, which was at a standstill in the final days of session because of a filibuster, did not complete the override motion until the annual Veto Session in September. Because of the timing of the veto override motions, the Missouri Supreme Court later struck down the law.

The legislation approved this session by the House is meant to put the law back into effect. It is designed to make sure the state has enough money in its unemployment trust fund so that businesses don't have to pay a penalty. Specifically, it will increase the minimum amount of money in the fund before employers' contribution rates decrease. For example, Missouri businesses would see their contribution rates decrease by 12 percent if the fund has a balance greater than \$870 million. Supporters note that Missouri is the only state that has been forced to borrow money from the federal government to pay for unemployment benefits during each of the last five economic downturns. As a result, employers have been forced to pay millions of dollars in interest.

The bill also ties unemployment benefits to the average unemployment rate so that more benefits are available when unemployment is high. If the state were in a position of high unemployment (9 percent or higher) benefits would be available for 20 weeks. In periods of low unemployment (lower than 6 percent) benefits would be available for 13 weeks. Supporters say the change is an important step toward ensuring Missouri can afford to help its citizens during times when they are without work.

Opponents say the change will make it even more difficult for unemployed Missourians to obtain the financial support they need to pay their bills and keep food on the table. They say it will make the length of Missouri's unemployment benefits one of the shortest in the nation.

House Approves Legislation to Stop Illegal Use of Herbicides (HB 662)

The members of the Missouri House approved legislation that is meant to stop the illegal use of herbicides that have caused widespread damage to crops in the Southeast Missouri.

According to experts from the University of Missouri, many farmers in that region lost an average of 35 percent of their crops when neighboring farmers used an outdated Dicamba product. Wind and temperature changes caused that product to spread onto nearby fields. Because the product was drifting onto fields not planted with seeds resistant to it, those crops were damaged. At least 150 farmers were impacted by the illegal use of the product.

The legislation approved by the House would allow the Department of Agriculture to issue a fine to any individual who knowingly applies a herbicide to a crop for which the herbicide is not labeled for use. The department could issue a fine of up to \$1,000 per acre on which a product is spread illegally. The per-acre fine would be doubled for those who repeatedly violate the new law. Under current law, the fine is a flat \$1,000, which the sponsor of the bill said is not a strong enough deterrent. The money collected in fines would go to the local school district in which the violation occurred.

The bill would also give the Department of Agriculture additional powers to investigate claims of illegal uses. The department would be able to subpoena witnesses and compel the production of certain records related to the misuse of herbicides. Farmers penalized for illegal use would be liable to the department for its expenses and for personal property affected.

The bill includes an emergency clause, which would make it effective immediately upon being signed by the governor. The sponsor of the legislation told his colleagues, "If we do not raise the fine and the penalty for using illegal products, then we will have the same situation in 2017 that we had in 2016."

Expanding Virtual School Options for Missouri Students (HB 138)

The Missouri House has approved legislation meant to expand course options and access for K-12 students. The bill would change the Missouri Virtual Instruction Program (MOVIP) to "The Missouri Course Access Program" (MCAP) and allows any K-12 student to enroll in MCAP courses.

The Missouri Virtual Instruction Program was established in 2007 to offer online courses to public, private, and home school students. The program allows students to take advanced courses that are not currently offered by their local school districts. As the sponsor of the legislation pointed out, there are 255 school districts in Missouri that have no students in calculus; 213 that have no students in physics, 105 that have none in chemistry; and there are 110 school districts that have ended their gifted programs.

In order to give students in all parts of the state access to advanced coursework, the legislation would allow students to take online courses that would be paid by the school district or charter school. Students would be eligible if they have attended the school for at least one semester, and the course is not available in the school district. The bill requires the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to review the online courses to ensure they meet state standards.

The existing MOVIP has seen funding dwindle in recent years, which has limited free tuition to students who are unable to attend traditional schools because of health issues. The legislation that would change the program to MCAP would not rely on a direct appropriation, but would instead redirect a portion of the per-pupil funding provided by the state.

As the sponsor of the bill told his colleagues on the House floor, “Course access opens up possibilities for school districts. Course access makes education fair, equitable, and accessible.”

Missouri House Approves Perinatal Care Legislation (HB 58)

Members of the Missouri House gave bipartisan support this week to legislation meant to help reduce the incidence of preterm births and infant mortality in Missouri. The House approved legislation that would require the Department of Health and Senior Services to establish levels of neonatal and maternal care available at each birthing center in the state.

The bill is meant to provide a referral system that would ensure high risk and other at-risk newborns receive consultation and access to risk-appropriate care. In effect, it would ensure moms and babies receive the right care at the right place. Supporters note that approximately 25 percent of at-risk newborns in Missouri are born at a facility that is not equipped to meet their needs. They say enacting the legislation will allow complex care to be delivered in a more timely fashion to babies and mothers in need.

The House approved similar legislation during the 2016 legislative session, but the Senate failed to send the bill to the governor’s desk before time ran out.

Observing Missouri Memory Day

House members and visitors to the Capitol wore purple on Wednesday, Feb. 22 in honor of Missouri Memory Day. The annual event saw hundreds of advocates make their way to Jefferson City to educate elected officials about Alzheimer’s disease and the need to enhance access to care, support and services for people with dementia and their families.

According to the Alzheimer’s Association, Alzheimer’s is the most expensive disease in America. Right now, there are 5.4 million Americans with Alzheimer's. By 2050, the number of people age 65 and older with Alzheimer's disease may increase dramatically to a projected 13.8 million. Over the next 40 years, caring for people with Alzheimer’s will

cost the United States \$20 trillion, with nearly 60 percent of that borne by Medicare. Advocates say that the development of a treatment that delayed onset of Alzheimer's by just five years would reduce Medicare spending on those with the disease by 45 percent in 2050.

House Members Recognize the Achievements of Eagle Scouts

House members took time this week to honor the hard work and success of Eagle Scouts from around the state. The young Scouts who achieved the rank of Eagle Scout during 2016 were on hand at the Capitol for Missouri Eagle Scout Recognition Day on Monday, Feb. 20.

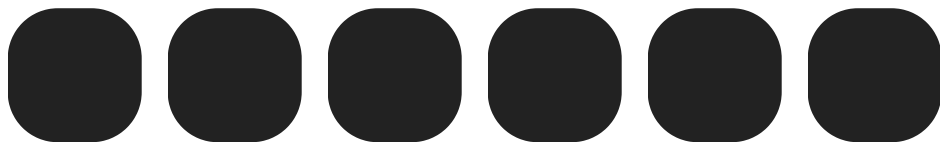
Several of the scouts made their way to the House Chamber where they were recognized for reaching the highest achievement of any Scout. The Scouts also participated in a recognition program in the Capitol Rotunda that was highlighted by a keynote address from Missouri Secretary of State Jay Ashcroft, who is himself an Eagle Scout.

The Eagle Scout award is a performance-based achievement. To earn the Eagle Scout rank, which is the highest advancement rank in Scouting, a Boy Scout must fulfill requirements in the areas of leadership, service, and outdoor skills. Research has demonstrated the significant, positive impact Eagle Scouts have on society — from holding leadership positions in their workplaces and neighborhoods to voting and volunteering, and from protecting the environment to being prepared for emergencies.

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Jason Smith's Capitol Report - Friday, February 24, 2017

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Jason Smith's Capitol Report - Friday, February 24, 2017

This week, the United States House of Representatives will play host for President Trump's first formal address to the Joint Session of Congress. It is anticipated that the President will outline the many steps he and Congress will be taking in the coming months to help get millions of Americans back into the workforce. While investments in our nation's crumbling infrastructure will be discussed, along with a lowering of the crushing tax burden felt by families and farmers, some steps - like reducing the regulatory red tape stifling growth in this country - have already begun.

In the days surrounding the President's formal address, the House of Representatives will simultaneously take up and advance legislation I have authored known as the Searching for and Cutting Regulations that are Unnecessarily Burdensome Act or SCRUB Act for short. This law would help compliment and codify much of the work President Trump has already taken in his first 30 days in office to reduce the impact unelected Washington bureaucrats are having on the lives of everyday Americans.

During his first full week in office, on January 30th President Trump authored Executive Order, "Reducing Regulation and Controlling Agency Regulatory Costs". Among other things, a key component of that order was a calling for the removal of two regulations for every new one proposed. The SCRUB Act sets up a commission of those directly impacted by Washington regulations to help the White House identify those regulations which should be removed - giving the President the tools to reduce regulations which are duplicative, burdensome and holding back innovation, entrepreneurship and growth in this country.

The facts we know are indisputable - regulations are costing the American economy close to \$2 trillion, or \$15,000 per household with farmers and small business owners across the country citing 'regulations' as a major impactor on their business and bottom line. We know that with bipartisan support the SCRUB Act passed the House of Representatives already last year. And finally, we know that if the liberal leader of the Senate, New York Senator Chuck Schumer, would simply let his Democrat colleagues vote their conscience, policies which reduce the headache Washington regulations are causing for millions of American families, like the SCRUB Act, would be on President Trump's desk before summer.

Unfortunately obstructing the progress and advancement of policies which shrink the size of Washington and get our economy moving again has been the playbook of the liberals in Washington since the day Donald Trump stepped into office. With an eye already to the 2020 elections, Senators like Elizabeth Warren have joined with Schumer to make this one of the slowest presidential cabinet confirmation processes in recent history. They have objected to common sense policies like the REINS Act which would require congressional approval for any regulation costing more than \$100 million. Simply put, they are more interested in playing political games than in working with our newly elected President to change the course in Washington which millions of Americans supported, called for, and voted for this past November.

I am hopeful that after Tuesday night, those Washington insiders and Senators bent on obstruction will re-evaluate why their districts and states sent them to Washington. I am hopeful they will consider supporting the legislation, policies, laws, and nominations which will help alleviate the burden of an oversized federal government which taxes, regulates and spends too much. I know in the House of Representatives, with the passage of policies like the SCRUB Act, we are committed to giving President Trump the tools and resources he needs to enact the change in Washington that myself and millions of Americans have been overwhelmingly calling for.

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