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Blunt Receives 2017 Distinguished Public Service Award from AACR

APRIL 04TH 2017 BY DEE LOFLIN

Blunt Receives 2017 Distinguished Public Service Award from AACR

Washington, D.C. - U.S. Senator Roy Blunt (Mo.), chairman of the Senate Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee, received the American Association for Cancer Research's 2017 Distinguished Public Service Award. Blunt earned the award for his successful efforts to significantly increase funding for the National Institutes of Health and the National Cancer Institute.

“When everyone in your family is healthy, you have lots of problems; when someone is sick, you only have one problem,” Blunt said. “I’ve been proud to lead efforts as chairman of the Labor/HHS appropriations subcommittee to increase resources for life-saving biomedical research at the National Institutes of Health and the National Cancer Institute. Responsibly prioritizing resources for NIH and NIC will pave the way for new treatments and cures, reduce health care costs over the long term, and help maintain America’s competitive edge in innovation.”

Through his position as chairman of the Labor/HHS appropriations subcommittee, Blunt secured a \$2 billion increase for NIH in the FY 2016 omnibus appropriations bill, which included a five percent increase for NCI. This was the first significant increase for NIH in over a decade.

In June 2016, Blunt secured another \$2 billion increase for NIH in the bipartisan, committee-passed FY2017 Labor/HHS appropriations bill.

Blunt continued, “Maintaining a robust, sustained federal commitment to medical research will give hope to more families battling cancer and other diseases. It’s an incredible honor to receive this award, and I’ll continue working to establish a pattern of responsibly investing in groundbreaking medical research, especially in areas such as cancer research.”

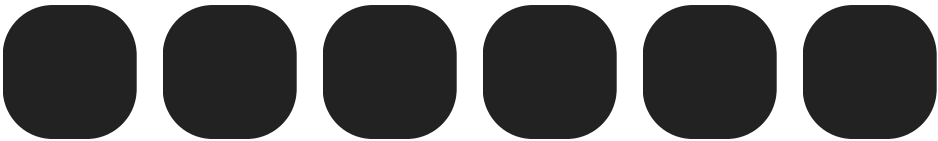
At the award ceremony, Blunt discussed the subcommittee hearing he chaired last month on the importance of investing in medical research. Blunt highlighted the testimony of Dr. Timothy Eberlein of St. Louis’ Siteman Cancer Center, who talked about the success that the NIH-led Precision Medicine Initiative, which Blunt started in last year’s Labor/HHS bill, has had in allowing doctors to use specific genetic information to tailor treatments to patients and improve outcomes of care.

In addition to his efforts as Labor/HHS subcommittee chairman, Blunt recently cosponsored the Childhood Cancer Survivorship, Treatment, Access, and Research (STAR) Act. The STAR Act is a bipartisan, comprehensive bill that would expand opportunities for childhood cancer research, improve efforts to identify and track incidence of childhood cancer, and enhance the quality of life for childhood cancer survivors.

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Congressman Jason Smith's Capitol Report - Friday, March 24, 2017

MARCH 27TH 2017 BY DEE LOFLIN

Congressman Jason Smith's Capitol Report - Friday, March 24, 2017

Under Construction: Jobs & Energy Independence
March 24, 2017

The number one responsibility of your government is to keep you and your loved ones safe. Energy security – knowing we can put gas in our cars and heat our homes – is a major part of that safety and security. But for too long, the government has been dependent on Middle Eastern countries supplying us with oil, sitting back and waiting for them to provide our energy resources – leaving us with a hefty price tag.

This week, President Trump took major action to move forward with the Keystone XL pipeline project. A project which will make us less reliant on countries who don't have our best interests at heart and will secure our energy independence while adding jobs and growing the economy.

The request to begin construction on the Keystone XL pipeline was first submitted to President Obama in 2008. But Barack Obama spent all eight years of his presidency prioritizing and championing the radical environmental cause. Even after Obama's State Department determined the pipeline project would not contribute to climate change, Obama put politics ahead of the American people and refused to approve the pipeline.

From eight years of obstruction to eight weeks of action, President Trump has worked quickly to move the Keystone XL pipeline project forward. During his first week in

office, President Trump signed a Presidential Memorandum to clear roadblocks and speed up the approval process for the pipeline. And this week, he signed the final permit to approve construction of the pipeline.

The construction of the Keystone XL Pipeline will lower energy costs for Missouri families and infuse our country's economy with the kind of infrastructure investment that creates and supports jobs.

This pipeline is an \$8 billion investment that will create more than 42,000 construction jobs. The project will use American steel and direct roughly \$3.4 billion into the pockets of hardworking Americans who desperately need it. These dollars will go to cash-strapped communities in rural America, supporting local grocery stores, local car dealerships, local restaurants, local housing markets - the list goes on and on.

I have been pushing for construction of the pipeline since joining Congress forty months ago. In 2015, I voted for the Keystone XL Pipeline Approval Act. This bill had bipartisan support from over 300 members of Congress, would have put thousands of Americans back to work and reduced the burden of high energy costs. This legislation advanced through both Chambers of Congress and made it all the way to President Obama's desk, only to be ignored.

The Keystone XL Pipeline will carry nearly 800,000 barrels of North American oil per day. It makes zero sense to rely on foreign countries for our energy when we have access to a wealth of energy resources right here in America.

Between lower gas prices and less money on your energy bills, Missourians are set to benefit from the Keystone XL pipeline project. Calling this a "new era for American energy," President Trump promised his administration would follow through with more infrastructure projects that put a paycheck directly in the hands of hardworking Americans. I am glad President Trump approved construction of the pipeline, and am thankful to see our government prioritizing the nation's security - finally making it possible to stop relying on Middle Eastern nations to meet America's energy needs.

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Hubrecht Supports Charter School Compromise

MARCH 20TH 2017 BY DEE LOFLIN

Hubrecht Supports Charter School Compromise

State Rep. Tila Hubrecht Supports Charter School Compromise,
Includes Full Funding for Missouri's Public Schools

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. – Missouri's public schools will receive full funding for the first time under a charter school bill supported by state Rep. Tila Hubrecht. Hubrecht had been opposed to charter school expansion but said a compromise put forward by House Speaker Todd Richardson included the funding and accountability measures that made the bill more palatable.

"I am a strong defender of our public school system and believe we have amazing schools providing a world class education to our young people. I don't want to do anything to jeopardize that, and I firmly believe the bill the House passed has protections in place to ensure our public schools will be able to continue to succeed," said Hubrecht, R-Dexter. "As part of the compromise on the bill, public schools will now receive record funding levels as our foundation formula will be fully funded for the first time. This is great news for our young people and for our educators who will have access to the resources they need to provide a quality education."

The language included in the charter school bill (HB 634) would limit charter school expansion only to areas where schools are failing. The bill is meant to provide additional options to students who would otherwise have nowhere else to turn to receive a quality education.

“Some have accused me of being dishonest on this issue because I supported the bill after being opposed to charter school expansion in the past. The truth is that Speaker Richardson listened to my concerns and worked with me and other members of our caucus make this bill one we all could live with,” said Hubrecht. “This bill isn’t perfect but it does strengthen our support for public schools, while also allowing for the doors of opportunity to be opened for young people who would otherwise be left behind.”

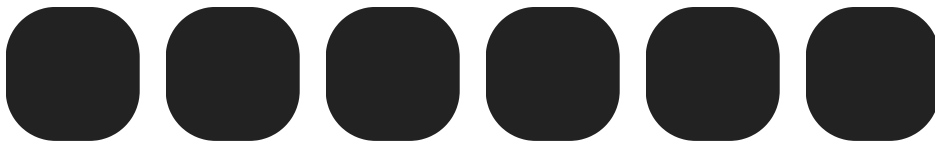
Hubrecht noted that the legislation would increase the accountability and academic requirements for not only new charter schools, but existing ones as well. The bill would limit charter school expansion to districts that have a school building with an Annual Performance Report (APR) score of 60 or lower in two of the last three years. If a charter underperforms in comparison to similar schools in their district for two of the past three years, they will be limited to a three-year charter renewal. The bill provides that charter schools will have a three year probationary period, and if a charter performs poorly during two of the three years, that charter school will be ineligible for renewal and will be forced to close.

The bill would also limit the public dollars sent to charter schools to more than 90 percent of the sending district’s tuition. Additionally, the bill is contingent on the school foundation formula being fully funded. If the K-12 formula is not fully funded, then no charter school changes go into effect.

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Hubrecht's Capitol Report - Friday, March 17, 2017

MARCH 20TH 2017 BY DEE LOFLIN

Hubrecht's Capitol Report - Friday, March 17, 2017

House Budget Committee Unveils Spending Proposal that Fully Funds Education

Missouri's public schools would be fully funded for the first time under the budget proposal unveiled by the House Budget Committee Chairman this week. The proposed spending plan would also restore a proposed cut to in-home care and nursing home services for senior and disabled Missourians.

The Budget Chairman said the 13 appropriations bills that will make up the Fiscal Year 2018 state operating budget represent the legislature's commitment to its young people, as well as to its most vulnerable citizens.

In addition to the additional \$48 million that will fully fund the School Foundation Formula, the House budget proposal restores proposed cuts to K-12 transportation funding. The plan also secures \$6 million in funding to increase broadband internet access for Missouri schools. Additionally, the House budget plan restores \$21.75 million in proposed cuts for the state's institutions of higher learning.

The FY 2018 spending plan proposed by the House Budget Committee also restores approximately \$52 million in proposed cuts that would have impacted 20,000 seniors and disabled Missourians who currently qualify for state-funded in-home care and nursing home services.

Other notable funding decisions in the House plan include \$3.5 million to fulfill the state's commitment to the Biodiesel Producer Incentive Fund, record levels of funding for the state employee pension plan, and \$1.4 million to fund a system of voter identification in Missouri.

The House Budget Committee will work to finalize the budget bills and send them to the floor when the House returns from Spring Break. House Leaders plan discuss the bills on the House floor and have them out of the House by April 6. The Senate and House will then have until May 5 to agree to a spending plan and send it to the governor.

House Approves Legislation to Create Senior Service Protection Fund (HCB 3)

The members of the Missouri House have approved a change to the state's circuit breaker tax credit that will free up funds for vital in-home care and nursing home services for Missouri's most vulnerable citizens.

It was in early February that Governor Greitens unveiled a budget plan that proposed saving \$52 million by changing the eligibility standards for home and community-based services. As a result, approximately 20,000 seniors and disabled Missourians would no longer qualify for the state-funded care. House leaders responded by working toward a solution that would provide funding for the programs during a difficult budget year.

The legislation approved this week would create the Missouri Senior Services Protection Fund to provide funding for services for low-income seniors and disable persons. To provide the funding, the legislation ends the renter's portion of the senior citizens property tax credit. The change would generate up to \$56 million in funds that would be used to help provide health care services to Missouri's most vulnerable citizens.

Proponents of the change say it returns the credit to its intended purpose of providing property tax relief for seniors so they can afford to stay in their homes. They say the Senior Services Protection Fund will allow the state to reinvest money to more effectively serve low-income seniors and disabled Missourians. Supporters also say the change will not diminish Missouri's commitment to its most vulnerable citizens, and will instead ensure those who need care the most will receive it.

Those who oppose the bill say that eliminating the tax credit would impact many disabled and senior citizens greatly by removing funds they use to purchase goods and services not covered by Medicaid. They say there are other options the legislature could explore to

secure funding for in-home care and nursing home services. They say it does not benefit seniors to swap one necessary program for another.

Legislation to Stop Illegal Use of Herbicides Receives Final Legislative Approval (HB 662)

The House and Senate have agreed to legislation that is meant to stop the illegal use of herbicides that have caused widespread damage to crops in 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. Under current law, the fine is a flat \$1,000, which the sponsor of the bill said is not a strong enough deterrent. Under the bill, the department could issue a fine of up to \$10,000 per violation when a product is spread illegally. The fine would escalate to up to \$25,000 per violation for those who repeatedly break the new law. The money collected from any 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 herbicide use. 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.

Expert Witness Legislation Headed to the Governor's Desk (HB 153)

This week the Senate took up and passed House legislation meant to improve the reliability of expert evidence that is presented to juries in Missouri state courts. The bill, which is now on its way to the governor, would implement an established standard for determining when expert-witness testimony is admissible as evidence at trial. The

proposed standard, which is commonly referred to as the Daubert standard after a 1993 U.S. Supreme Court case, is used in federal courts and in more than two-thirds of the states.

The bill is an important component of the legislature's tort reform efforts this year. Supporters of the change say the bill will ensure that testimony from someone designated by lawyers as an 'expert' can be relied upon by citizen jurors.

Supporting Missouri's Sheltered Workshops (HCR 28)

This week, House members showed their support for the thousands of Missourians with developmental disabilities who develop professional skills in the state's sheltered workshops.

Sheltered Workshops provide a controlled work environment and a program designed toward enabling individuals with disabilities to progress toward normal living. Currently, more than 6,300 Missourians with developmental disabilities are employed by Missouri's 92 sheltered workshops, with another 1,100 waiting to work.

Unlike many states, Missouri does not use federal dollars to fund the workshops. Instead, the workshops generate as much as 70 to 80 percent of their funding from contract services, and then receive additional funds from their county and the state.

Despite this, the federal government has impacted the way workshops operate in Missouri. Supporters of workshops say the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, which went into effect in 2016, is adding bureaucratic layering that slows the process of finding work for those who have disabilities. They refer to it as an unfunded mandate that is placing an undue burden on the workshops.

The House approved a resolution to reaffirm Missouri's support of the sheltered workshops in the state. The sponsor hopes it will help send a message to federal legislators that will cause them to take a second look at the unintended consequences of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.

Raising the Marriage Age to Protect Young People (HB 270)

The legislature continued its fight against human trafficking this week as the House approved legislation to raise the minimum age for marriage from 15 to 17 years old.

Missouri currently has a minimum age of 18 to obtain a marriage license without parental consent. Young people age 15 to 17 can receive a license with parental consent. Individuals of any age also have the option to get married without consent if they successfully petition the court to obtain a license.

The legislation approved by the House would raise the age requirement to 17. An earlier version of the bill had raised concerns that Missouri law would block a marriage and interfere in the decision of a family in situations in which no coercion or wrongdoing is present. The bill's language was changed to require a hearing before a judge, so that parties can present evidence that the marriage is advisable. The bill also includes a provision to ensure no marriage license is issued to any person 21 years of age or older if the other party to the marriage is less than 17 years of age.

Supporters say the goal of the bill is to prevent child marriages that are used to disguise abusive situations and human trafficking. They note that Virginia recently raised its minimum age requirement after seeing a large number of underage girls marry men who were far older. According to one study, more than 7,300 teens under the age of 18 were married in Missouri from 2000 to 2014.

House Approves Cronkite New Voices Act to Ensure the Free Speech Rights of Student Journalists (HB 441)

The members of the Missouri House gave approval this week to legislation designed to better protect the free speech rights of student journalists. The Cronkite New Voices Act is meant to ensure high school and college student reporters will be able to do their jobs without fear of censorship from administrators or teachers.

The bill is modeled after legislation approved in Kansas, Illinois, and North Dakota. If approved in Missouri, it would prevent school authorities from exercising prior restraints over student media except when they are about to publish libelous or slanderous material, invade privacy, violate state or federal law or incite students to create a clear and present danger to the institution. It also would restrict authorities from disciplining student journalists or controlling their activities outside of school. Additionally, the bill would require each school district to adopt a written student freedom of expression policy.

Supporters note that student journalists often work on controversial topics and that schools sometimes do not allow the stories to come to light. They note that the 1988 Supreme Court case, *Hazelwood School District v. Kuhlmeier*, decided that a high school-sponsored newspaper produced as part of a class without a clear policy establishing it as a

public forum for student expression could be censored. Supporters say it's important to protect the first amendment rights of student journalists

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Congressman Smith's Capitol Report - Friday, March 17, 2017

MARCH 20TH 2017 BY DEE LOFLIN

Congressman Smith's Capitol Report - Friday, March 17, 2017

***Check Your Tackle Box & Keep an Eye on Your Gun Case
March 17, 2017***

Did you know that on his way out of office, President Obama tried to regulate the ammo in your gun and the fishing sinkers in your tackle box?

Before he jetted off to the Caribbean, President Obama managed to take a final swipe at Missourians' way of life with "Director's Order No. 219," a last-minute regulation that banned lead ammunition and fishing tackle on federal lands. In other words, President Obama's rule would not have allowed you to take shotgun shells or fishing sinkers with you to hunt in Mark Twain National Forest or fish at Clearwater Lake.

Printed out, the current Code of Federal Regulations would physically cover more than 2.5 acres of land. That is 175,268 pages of burdens weighing down Missourians. Fortunately, I was able to stop them from adding another page to that stack and defend our right to decide what we do with our weekends.

After hearing the concerns of hunters and fishermen in southern Missouri, I led the effort to have 60 Members of Congress send a letter to President Trump asking him to overturn the ban. You see, in Missouri, we know how to be good stewards of the land God has given us, and we do not need the federal government monitoring our movements while we enjoy creation. At the beginning of this month, my letter to President Trump resulted in the Obama-era lead ban being overturned by my friend and former colleague Ryan Zinke in one of his first acts as U.S. Department of Interior Secretary.

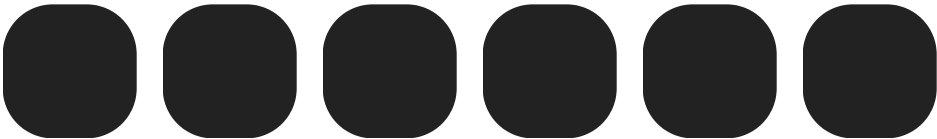
This rule had no basis in science and was written without any input from those most affected by its enactment. Sportsmen and fishermen are some of our country's greatest conservationists. Obama's order only served to hinder them from participating in the recreational use of federal lands they've enjoyed for decades. The regulatory red tape thrown up by unelected bureaucrats over the last eight years is exactly what the American people soundly rejected when they elected Donald Trump in November.

It was a complete overreach by the Obama administration to decide what type of ammunition or fishing tackle you carry while exploring the great outdoors of Missouri. In typical Washington, D.C. fashion, President Obama wanted to show Missourians that he knew what was best for us. Fortunately, we have a new president who understands and trusts us to tell him what we need, not the other way around.

We have all seen President Trump's work thus far, undoing the damage of President Obama's executive actions and appointing the right people like Secretary Zinke to do the same thing. After eight years of Obama's overreach, whether it is something as big as Obamacare or as small as the fishing tackle you pack on a weekend trip with your family, I am committed to defending southern Missouri's way of life.

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