

IN THE NEWS THIS WEEK

NEWS BRIEFS FROM AROUND THE CAPITOL MAY 27- JUNE 1, 2009

May 27, 2009

**Local lawmakers at center of autism fight
Bill would have required insurance companies to cover treatment**

Suburban Journals, Raymond Castile

A bill requiring insurance companies to pay for childhood autism therapy died earlier this month, but Missouri lawmakers could revisit the issue next session. "The earlier you intervene with these children, the fewer services they need," said state Sen. Eric Schmitt, R-15th District. "Their brains are developing and we can make critical progress. Every year this bill does not pass, we miss an opportunity to positively affect these kids."

Schmitt, the father of a 4-year-old son with autism, supported Senate Bill 167, sponsored by state Sen. Scott Rupp, R-2nd District. The bill would have required insurance companies to cover the diagnosis and treatment of autism for children younger than 18 years.

The bill passed the Missouri Senate 29-2. But in the House, it languished in committees. The bill died in the fiscal review committee, where it never came to a vote.

State **Rep. Sally Faith**, R-15th District, was the committee's vice chairman. Faith said the bill would have cost the state \$10 million over three years.

"It is \$10 million we don't have," said Faith, who also represents parts of St. Charles County. "In these economic times, we need to create more jobs and enable people to run their small businesses," Faith said. "And yet, we have needs to be met, like autism. What is the best way to do that?"

Rupp said informal polling revealed the bill had 110 votes in the House, more than enough for passage. He said he thought **Speaker of the House Ron Richards** and other House leaders blocked the bill. "And I can't get any compromise between autism groups and insurance groups," Richards said. "Each one has their own supporters in the House." "I told the insurance companies that they are going to come to the table and compromise," Richards said. "They assured me they would. I said, 'If you don't, I will do it for you.'"

Republican lawmakers display indifference to citizens

Springfield News-Leader, Roger Ray, Op-Ed

Dr. Roger Ray (RevDrRay@aol.com) is a local pastor contributing his personal opinion, not that of his church.

Our battle-weary state legislators are now home after the end of a session which, it seems, was one of our most embarrassing legislative sessions to date. The partisan bickering and the posturing of legislators with aspirations set on Senate seats or other elected offices made this session a colossal waste of time and money.

May 28, 2009

Richard promises autism insurance bill for next year

Kansas City Star, Jason Noble

After catching flak for House inaction on a bill requiring insurance companies to cover autism, **House Speaker Ron Richard** promised Wednesday to bring all the sides together this summer and file a bill next winter.

"I have instructed several of my chairman to work to compose a plan that will bring insurance companies and autism advocacy groups together for a compromised solution to this very real problem," Richard, a Joplin Republican, said in a statement.

Ed Martin to Chris Kelly: Let's rumble -- "anytime, any place"

Kansas City Star, Steve Kraske

Ed Martin, the former chief of staff to Gov. Matt Blunt who now heads Term Limits for Missouri, is calling for a Show-Me Smack down over term limits. He wants to go toe to State **Rep. Chris Kelly**, a Democratic state lawmaker from Columbia, who spoke out last weekend about his interest in seeing term limits loosened in Missouri.

NOTE: Information copied directly from media source

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May 29, 2009

Farmers urged to get message out

Hannibal Courier Post, Brent Engle

...Hoerr joined more than 125 other producers, legislators, business people and educators Wednesday for "Missouri Agriculture's Lunch and Learn." Democrat State **Rep. Paul Quinn** of Monroe City and Republican State **Rep. Brian Munzlinger** of Williamstown agreed cooperation among the usually independent-minded ag community is a key to a stable farm economy. "Anytime you can showcase Missouri agriculture, I think it's important," Quinn said. "We need to promote ag. If we don't promote it, it's a lost effort." Farmers' incomes are "circulated around the local economy," Munzlinger said. "That's quite a driver around here. If you don't tell the right story, somebody else is going to tell it, and it won't be right."

Nixon touts health care education funds

\$40 million program expands admission for students across state.

Springfield News-Leader, Chad Livengood

Standing in a hallway of the aging building that houses Missouri State University's nursing program, Gov. Jay Nixon acknowledged on Thursday the need for taxpayer investment in facilities to train in-demand health care workers. But the new \$91 million health sciences building MSU was seeking in a massive \$700 million bonding bill this year will have to wait, the governor said. However, Nixon said, state lawmakers have changed their attitude toward universities and community colleges about their abilities to create jobs. "The one thing that didn't get trimmed this year, the one thing we're investing in, is higher education in the state of Missouri," said Nixon, noting his deal to get universities to freeze tuition rates next year in exchange for no cut in state funding.

May 30 - June 1, 2009

Beyond gridlock: How Democrat Nixon learned to live with a GOP Legislature

St. Louis Beacon, Jo Mannies

Today, another Democrat -- Gov. Jay Nixon -- officially will receive all the bills approved by the GOP-controlled Legislature during the 4-month session that ended May 15. And as both sides acknowledge, those measures include some of the key initiatives sought by Nixon. Both sides seem to be accepting the state budget for the coming fiscal year, although Nixon plans to make some line-item vetoes in HB22, the massive capital-improvement bill that doles out more than \$800 million in federal stimulus money. The Senate did the governor a favor by killing controversial proposals dealing with abortion and judicial-selection. Nixon, in turn, says he's unlikely to call a special session to rehash any unresolved fights.

Nixon begins reviewing 2010 Missouri Budget

KWMU, Marshall Griffin

Mo. Gov. Jay Nixon at a press conference outside the State Capitol Building May 29th, 2009. KWMU-FM Governor Jay Nixon says he's begun reviewing Missouri's budget for Fiscal Year 2010. Nixon also told reporters he'll announce in the next 10 days to two weeks which budget items will get the pen or the axe.

Mid-Missouri feels the impact of term limits in a big way

Jefferson City News Tribune, Kris Hilgedick

With five men interested in Missouri's 6th Senate District, it's possible the Republican primary next summer could be hard-fought and even contentious.

The seat currently is occupied by Sen. Carl Vogel, R-Jefferson City, who faces term-limits.

Of those five potential candidates, three - **Rep. Mark Bruns**, R-Wardsville, **Rep. Kenny Jones**, R-Clarksburg, and Jefferson City Area Chamber of Commerce Chairman Harry Otto - are actively campaigning.

Rep. Bill Deeken, R-Jefferson City, said he's been encouraged to run by supporters, but likely won't announce a decision formally until the fall. Although he initially ruled out a Senate campaign, Deeken said: "I've been getting a lot of calls that have caused me to change my mind."



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Committee hopes to take more rational approach to stimulus funds

Kansas City Star, Jason Noble

An interim committee will spend the next few months deciding how to evaluate potential recipients of stimulus funds and then identifying what specific projects should be funded.

The goal, said Committee **Chairman Allen Icet**, a St. Louis County Republican, is to develop lists of projects the state can fund should it have \$250 million or \$500 million or more available for the fiscal year 2011 budget, which begins in about 13 months. The city's (Kansas City) efforts may be helped by a change in leadership decided at the end of the meeting: Icet stepped down and **Rep. Ryan Silvey**, a Kansas City Republican was elected in his place.

NIXON'S WEEK 20 GRADE: A –

KY3, David Catanese

While Governor Nixon did not win an agreement to expand healthcare to low-income parents this legislative session, he did attain a smaller victory on a \$40 million dollar program designed to expand healthcare training programs at colleges and universities. It's a less controversial initiative, but one that Nixon says will make tangible progress towards his number one priority: creating jobs. When you can please the higher education folks at the same time, it's even better. Nixon also won some favorable press in a look back at his first session. Jo Mannies of the St. Louis Beacon penned a comprehensive article showing why a "kinder, gentler" Nixon has (so far) been more successful than Missouri's last Democratic Governor. It's tough for the GOP to churn out serious attacks on Nixon when the Republican Senate Majority Leader is referring to the Governor as pragmatic and patient. Sure, Nixon can be political and partisan like the best of them. But it seems that even Republican leaders are willing to acknowledge his bipartisan attempts, despite broader ideological rifts.