Missouri House approves funding for Ellis Fischel Cancer Center

By Marty Swant
April 26, 2010 | 9:11 p.m. CDT

JEFFERSON CITY — The House gave a 38-119 vote to shut down an amendment that would have cut $31 million in funds for an expansion of the Ellis Fischel Cancer Center.

The funding for the center is part of a re-appropriations bill that received first-round approval Monday. The money for the program had been withheld from appropriations by Gov. Jay Nixon last year.

The amendment that would have cut the funding was proposed by Rep. Ward Franz, R-West Plains.

The Ellis Fischel funding came from a two-year $350 million construction bill created in 2009, according to House Budget Chairman Allen Icet, R-Wildwood. The re-appropriation bill takes yet-to-be appropriated money from other bills and assigns it to different expenditures.

The question for a long time has been to figure out how to fit in the project that only three weeks ago wasn't even in the budget, said Rep. Chris Kelly, D-Columbia. Kelly, who worked to restore funding for the center, said the legislation has been a long process but passed a major obstacle by receiving first-round approval. He said the "great champion" of the appropriation was Icet.

Federal money comes to Missouri through several "pipes," Kelly said. One of those pipes reimburses the state for highway projects, but no law — either state or federal — prohibits using that money to fund other projects.
"It's a pipeline, but it has a valve," Kelly said. "What I did was find the valve that other people did not realize that was there. So at the last minute, we turned the tap on that valve."

Franz said he worried the center's funding was nothing but an earmark that would take away from federal money already promised specifically for road and bridge improvements. He said his amendment wasn't against the cancer center itself, but mentioned there are cancer centers around the state already.

"We're setting a precedence here that's a little dangerous down the road," he said.

Kelly said opponents might say money can't be moved from road improvement projects, but he's already learned from the federal Highway Department that it's allowed.

Icet said legislators have tried to fund the center for at least the past four years, but the money was never available. While he said he understands the governor's goal of a balanced budget, he said the center is an important project.

"This is one of the few that truly is a critical need and serves to the benefit of a significant number of people in the state," he said.

The center's total project cost is projected to be around $52 million, said Mary Jenkins, spokeswoman for the center. The additional $21 million needed to build the 100,000-square-foot facility would come out of University Hospital's operating revenue.

Jenkins said the project would support doctors, nurses, new technology and a higher patient capacity, all of which are needed to keep current with treatment and research.

Icet said preliminary design plans and other upfront work will begin sometime in the next fiscal year. Another benefit for the project, he said, is that it would create hundreds of jobs for Missourians during a bleak economy.
MU sports future

Joining the Big 10, or so

By Henry J. Waters III

Monday, April 26, 2010

I can’t remember when the first time the prospect of the University of Missouri joining the Big 10 athletic conference became big talk, but back then it was essentially idle conjecture, so remote was the possibility. I favored the idea in this column with notable lack of success.

Now the issue is back, and this time smart money is betting on something happening. For a good report on the situation, see Joe Walljasper’s column in yesterday’s sports pages.

The Big 10 actually has 11 schools. Commissioner Jim Delaney has put his organization in good position to add one or as many as five schools, with Missouri as a prime prospect. If Delaney adds five, MU seems almost certain to get an invitation. Even if only one is added, Missouri is as good a bet as any.

Most talk is about money. Any of the prospect schools would get more millions in shared revenue from the Big-Something than from their present conferences, which all have multiyear contracts locking in current television arrangements. How clever of Delaney to fathom this vulnerability, making now a perfect time to make a move without actually having a serious time deadline. He says he will tell something to the waiting — panting — world by year’s end.

My own bit of research says athletic prowess and money are not the only important factors. Believe it or not, the Big 10 cares about the academic characteristics of its potential new partner(s). Lord knows, MU in particular should care about this equation in reverse.

An association with the Big 10 would put MU in a new league academically as well. We would move from middling status in the Big 12 to near the bottom in the Big 10, creating a new order of academic impetus that only could spur MU upward. And the Big 10 has reason to covet academic MU as well. MU is an AAU Research I institution with an unusual array of programs: medicine, veterinary science, journalism, nuclear reactor — the works.

Not to stray too far from the money angle, MU would bring two pretty good TV markets, and though seldom mentioned, I’ll bet Big 10 officials are aware of the good and improving status of Missouri’s non-revenue sports: volleyball, soccer, softball, baseball, track and field and all the others in various stages of building, including women’s basketball replete with a new coach and new aspirations.
Leaving the Big 12 could mean the loss of the Big Game with Kansas, but who says? Athletic Director Mike Alden indicates the game would continue. Walljasper mentions it might be played every other year. Why not every year if it’s deemed important enough?

Upsides seem larger than downsides. If that crafty Delaney gets his way, he will reform his sports conference into the nation’s blockbuster athletic showcase. If the bandwagon comes close enough, Mizzou should hop aboard.

HJW III
Obama to Focus on Jobs, Rural Economy in Two-Day Midwest Trip

Monday, April 26, 2010

April 27 (Bloomberg) -- President Barack Obama embarks on a two-day, campaign-style swing through the rural Midwest today to talk about the U.S. economy and jobs as he turns attention to what will be a top issue in the November midterm elections.

With stops in Illinois, Iowa and Missouri to highlight his economic policies, the president's trip will include two town hall meetings, stops at a Siemens AG wind-turbine plant and a Poet LLC ethanol refinery, and talks with farmers, small business owners and local leaders.

"We're hanging on, just treading in the water," said Amy Looten, executive director of the Quincy Area Chamber of Commerce in Western Illinois. People want to hear "that he'll create jobs," she said. The February unemployment rate the area was 9.6 percent, according to the Labor Department.

The visits are part of what Obama calls a White House to Main Street tour, and follow similar outings in Pennsylvania, Ohio and Georgia to promote the $862 billion economic stimulus program and the health-care overhaul designed to cover millions of uninsured Americans and slow rising health costs.

Before the trip, the White House released a 42-page paper saying the administration is pumping billions of dollars into rural America with programs for small business loans, education, medical care, and farm exports.

It's an outline of "what we've already invested and what we hope to continue investing in rural communities," Christina Romer, chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers said in a conference call yesterday.

Lagging Behind Cities

About 50 million Americans live in rural areas, the paper said, where the labor force "is aging and its educational attainment lags behind" urban areas. Health-care improvements "have not kept pace" with large cities, it said.
All three Midwest states on Obama's itinerary have felt the worst recession since the 1930s. March unemployment was 6.8 percent in Iowa, 9.5 percent in Missouri and 11.5 percent in Illinois.

In Fort Madison, Iowa, the president will talk about the economy, alternative energy and green jobs at a plant owned by Munich-based Siemens that makes blades for wind turbines and got a $3.5 million stimulus-funded tax credit in January.

Other stops include Quincy, Mount Pleasant and Ottumwa, Iowa, and Macon, Missouri, where Obama is scheduled to visit a facility run by Sioux Falls, South Dakota-based Poet, the biggest U.S. ethanol producer.

'Sour Mood'

"Jobs is the main thing," said Tom Rudolph, a political science professor at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. "It's a contributor to the sour mood" of voters.

The White House report said the dollar value of small business loans has climbed to 2.5 times the level of January 2009, when Obama took office. Romer said rural areas also will benefit from a White House program to increase U.S. exports, including sales of grain and livestock.

"Better promotion of our exports, better enforcement of our trade agreements, expansion of a trade agreements -- all of those things benefit rural America," Romer said. The value of farm exports is equivalent to 29 percent, or about $100 billion, of farmers' $344 billion in gross farm income forecast this year by the U.S. Agriculture Department.

The trip comes less than seven months before elections that will determine control of Congress. The most competitive House races include 33 Democratic-held and six Republican-held seats, according to the three Washington-based publications that rate congressional races, the Cook Political Report, the Rothenberg Political Report and Congressional Quarterly.

Local Candidates

Obama, a Democrat, may "work in at least some endorsements of local Democratic candidates," said L. Marvin Overby, interim political science chairman at the University of Missouri-Columbia.

Missouri's Democratic Secretary of State Robin Carnahan is in a tight race with Republican Representative Roy Blunt for the seat of retiring Republican Senator Kit Bond.

In Illinois, Democratic Senate candidate Alexi Giannoulias, seeking the seat once held by Obama, said over the weekend the seizure of his family's bank by U.S. regulators won't derail his campaign, in which he's facing Republican Representative Mark Kirk. Giannoulias's office said he will attend Obama's Quincy town hall tomorrow.
Obama yesterday sought to confront a potential anti-incumbent atmosphere, releasing a video in which he urged supporters of his 2008 presidential campaign to return to the polls in November.

'Special Interests'

Obama said successes in overhauling health care and jump-starting the economy were in danger from lobbyists for Wall Street bankers, insurance companies and "special interests" threatening to "undo" his agenda.

"If you help make sure that first-time voters in 2008 make their voices heard again in November," Obama said in a clip on Google Inc.'s YouTube Web site, "then together we will deliver on the promise of change, hope and prosperity for generations to come."

Obama will tell voters he's aware of middle-class struggles and the loss of more than 8 million jobs during the recession, even as he points to gains in the stock market and other economic indicators as evidence that his policies are beginning to work, Overby said.

"He will urge patience and offer hope that conditions will continue to improve," Overby said in an e-mail.

--With assistance from Jonathan Salant and Alan Bjerga in Washington. Editors: Bob Drummond, Joe Sobczyk.

Read more: http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/g/a/2010/04/26/bloomberg1376-L1IBIU1A14H-2.DTL#ixzz0mJ0IKNgV
COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

Madoff whistle-blower to visit MU

By Anne Christnovich
April 26, 2010 | 4:06 p.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — Harry Markopolos labeled his analysis of Bernie Madoff’s investment strategy “The World’s Largest Hedge Fund is a Fraud.” He sent the 20-page analysis to the Securities and Exchange Commission.

And no one believed him.

It took him three years of whistle-blowing until Madoff finally turned himself in. Markopolos recently released a book titled, “No One Would Listen.”

The impact of Madoff’s scheme and Markopolos’ work prompted the MU School of Accountancy in the Trulaske College of Business to recruit Markopolos for this year’s Richard M. Orin Ethics Symposium.

The school’s director, Vairam Arunachalam, said the value of speakers at the annual symposium highlight the importance of students developing a strong ethical consciousness in business and finance.

“Mr. Madoff has clearly had a large negative impact in investor confidence,” Arunachalam said. “I believe it’s hopefully a constructive look at what we can do to fix some of these problems. It’s not meant to be a rant, it’s meant to be constructive.”

The symposium will take place from 10 to 11:30 a.m. on Friday at Bush Auditorium at MU.