Kathryn Roberts, a graduate of the University of Missouri School of Social Work, stands with Truman the Tiger yesterday following a ceremony marking the name change of Maryland Avenue to Tiger Avenue.
Ceremony marks change of Maryland Avenue to Tiger Avenue

By DaMonica Boone

September 17, 2010 | 6:20 p.m. CDT

Truman the Tiger stands in front of the new Tiger Avenue sign during the renaming ceremony of Maryland Avenue on Friday in front of the Reynolds Alumni Center at MU. City Council voted to rename the street after a Sept. 7 City Council meeting. | Taylor Glascock

COLUMBIA — The Mizzou Alumni Association renamed Maryland Avenue on Friday while celebrating its Leaders Day and the start of Leaders Weekend.

Mayor Bob McDavid, alumni association President Randy Wright, alumni association student board President Justin Yeater and 150 MU alumni were in attendance.

Some MU students and Columbia residents have expressed disapproval of the name change because of the perceived historical value of Maryland Avenue.

Wright said the name “Maryland Avenue” was originally suggested by an MU professor in 1904 but bears no other historical significance.
The street's name change was based on more than school spirit, Wright said. He said the name "Tiger" was adopted during the Civil War by a unit of armed guards from Columbia.

"It’s more important to the city than Mizzou," Wright said.

McDavid thanked those who disapprove of the name change in his brief speech. He said he thought the renaming took place in the right location.

"It only makes sense to name it Tiger Avenue," McDavid said. "It’s the entrance to our campus and the entrance to our city."

In spite of some opposition to the street’s new name, event attendees appeared enthusiastic and pleased. Band music played and cheerleaders chanted as Truman the Tiger surprised the audience by arriving in a convertible and placing the new street sign on a stage.

“I think it’s great,” said 2000 MU alumna Casey Gentry of the street name change. “It has more meaning and more significance to the university and city.”
HR exec to tweak MU plan

Only new hires facing change.

By Janese Silvey

Sunday, September 19, 2010

The University of Missouri System’s top human resources administrator is trying to ease faculty and staff concerns about potential changes to the retirement benefits plan.

“I don’t have a defined contributions plan sitting on my desk,” Betsy Rodriguez told the MU Faculty Council on Thursday.

Still, administrators are sticking to a timeline that calls for some sort of benefits recommendation to go to the Board of Curators in December.

At issue is whether the system should require new hires to contribute to defined contributions plans instead of the defined benefits packages current employees have. The existing retirement system guarantees employees will receive 2.2 percent of their salary for every year of employment once they’re eligible to retire at age 65.

Under a defined contributions package, employees and the system would pay into a savings plan similar to a 401(k).

Administrators have been talking about the defined contributions option since a five-hour benefits meeting with curators in August 2009. That’s why Rodriguez countered the notion that a December deadline is short notice.

She also said several times that administrators don’t yet know what the recommendation will be. While switching to defined contributions is one option, Rodriguez said she could recommend changes to the existing benefit plan for new hires instead, or no change to the retirement plan at all.

The latter is unlikely. Although the university is committed to its obligations to current employees under the defined benefits plan, Rodriguez said it’s also risky to continue the current retirement plan into the future.

Requiring defined contributions plans for new employees, instead, would “help maintain stability in our current retirement program by limiting the fast-growing costs and market fluctuations that
place pressure on our already difficult budget situation,” UM System President Gary Forsee said in a letter to employees last month.

Any change would only affect future employees. At this time, administrators are not looking at a way for current employees to “opt in” to any new plan.

A change might not directly affect vested employees at MU, but that doesn’t mean they’re not interested in what a change would mean for new employees.

“We have an interest in the long-term future of the institution and want the university to be competitive,” said Sudarshan Loyalka, a curators’ professor of nuclear engineering and chairman of the council’s faculty affairs committee. “We want to make sure the university has a good package for benefits that is competitive for good faculty and staff who wish to come here.”

He said he believes administrators are going about any potential change “in good faith.”

“I hope” Rodriguez “comes back to faculty and staff and describes what the recommendations are and how they arrived at those recommendations,” he said.

Rodriguez said she will spend the next two months continuing to meet with employee groups and that they will see the plan before it goes to the curators.

Reach Janese Silvey at 573-815-1705 or e-mail jsilvey@columbiatribune.com.
Making New Connections

Adult day care services offer caregivers reprieve. By Catherine Martin

Sunday, September 19, 2010

Devonia Turner, 71, sits watching a DVD of her son singing and performing as Edna Ford, 97, sits in the chair beside her and knits. All the while, the two are surrounded by health professionals, student volunteers and other staff.

Hammond points out a lyric to Ruth Retallack during a group singing activity Wednesday at Adult Day Connection.

Their peers, all of whom were dropped off at the same facility by loved ones, are scattered throughout the room reading, resting or visiting with volunteers while they wait for an afternoon snack of vanilla wafer cookies and pink lemonade.

These seniors are not in a nursing home. In fact, they’re somewhere with a very different atmosphere, which soon becomes apparent.

“She loves to dance,” Jan Klatt, a licensed practical nurse, said of Turner. “Come on, Devonia, get up and show ’em!”

After a little help up, Turner gets up and busts a move. Her smile never fades from her face.

Turner and Ford are two participants at Adult Day Connection, a center that gives seniors a safe place to go during the day where they can have fun and socialize. When the day is done, they go home to their families.

The center is one of several alternative options in Columbia that offers families help caring for loved ones without taking the difficult step of putting them into a nursing home.

The program is part of MU’s School of Health Professions. Cheri Ghan, the school’s communications coordinator, said the biggest advantage of options such as Adult Day Connection is an increased quality of life for seniors.

“They are able to stay connected with their family and their friends on an everyday basis, and that’s very important to a lot of people,” she said.
Stanley Lavine, who started going to the center six months ago, knows this to be true. Before enrolling in the program, Lavine stayed at a residential care facility, where he only saw his family on the weekends and seldom interacted with his peers.

Now, Lavine is able to live with his son and daughter-in-law on their ranch. He spends about eight hours a day, Monday through Friday, at Adult Day Connection, where he has met many new friends, including Otha Kinnear.

“He’s my best friend,” Lavine said, sitting next to Kinnear.

Kinnear, who attends the program two days a week, also enjoys the company.

“It’s good fellowship,” he said.

Today marks the start of Adult Day Services Week, which has been celebrated annually for 27 years. The week is set aside each September to “raise awareness of the availability and accessibility of adult day programs nationwide,” according to the national Adult Day Services Association’s website.

Adult Day Connection has been striving to help families and seniors in Columbia for 20 years, when it started under the name Elder Care. Seniors who attend the program participate in a variety of activities that allow them to have fun and keep their minds and bodies active.

“We have a vigorous exercise program every day run by an occupational therapist,” program director Amy Byergo said. “It’s very important for everyone to stay moving and stay active.”

Other activities vary from day to day and include options such as musical performances, pet therapy, baking or craft projects.

The program is not only beneficial for participants but also offers relief for family and caregivers who want to keep a loved one at home but have to work during the day or just need a break.

Glenn Geiger takes his wife, Dolores, to the center three times a week.

“It gives me a chance to do things at home or just take a rest,” he said. Geiger has to help his wife with most tasks, and, as a senior himself, sometimes he needs time to get caught up on chores. But he said the experience has been positive for them both. “It’s been really nice. She can come over here and play games and exercise,” he said, emphasizing his support of the program’s goal. “Their objective and our objective is to keep people at home as long as possible.”

There are multiple organizations in Columbia working toward that same goal, including Home Instead Senior Care.

Home Instead allows seniors to remain living independently in their own homes by helping them with tasks such as laundry, cooking, shopping or other chores that can be difficult for seniors.
"The biggest advantage is clients get to live in their own home, which is where most of us want to stay as long as possible," said Debbie Critchfield, owner of the Mid-Missouri Home Instead franchise.

Another perk, she said, is seniors often build relationships with their caregivers as the organization tries to personalize each match.

Options such as Home Instead and Adult Day Connection, which are often less costly than full-time care in nursing homes, have gained financial appeal in light of current economic conditions. Adult Day Connection, one of three not-for-profit senior-focused organizations in Columbia, costs $72 a day, while Byergo said the average nursing home costs $150 a day.

Home Instead charges $18 an hour on weekdays and $20 on weekends but allows clients to choose how frequently they need services.

The Boone County Council on Aging, a not-for-profit agency, provides services similar to Home Instead to low-income seniors. Services include helping with everyday chores as well as relationship-building. "Most of our seniors are homebound and can't get out much, and this brings community into their lives," Executive Director Jessica Macy said.

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COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

Creating Original Music Project returns for annual competition

By Samantha Highfill
September 17, 2010 | 10:31 a.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — Earlier this week music teachers all across Missouri received a mailing about the annual Creating Original Music Project.

Organizers of the project, jointly operated by the MU School of Music and the Sinquefield Charitable Foundation, are encouraging the teachers to have their students apply.

The music project is an annual statewide musical competition for students grades K-12. Each student submits one original composition in a variety of musical styles. The winning composers and their schools receive cash prizes, as well as the opportunity to perform at the Creating Original Music Project’s New Music Festival at MU on April 23, 2011.

The deadline for submission is Jan. 3, 2011.
COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

MU police responds to bomb threat at Truman Veterans Hospital

By Thomas Nagel  
September 17, 2010 | 10:32 p.m. CDT

COLUMBIA – When campus police and a bomb squad unit responded to a potential bomb threat at Truman Veterans Hospital on Friday night, they were met with only an empty cooler.

MU Police Department Capt. Brian Weimer said police received a call from the hospital asking for assistance with the cooler, which had been left near the building. Police responded to the call at 8:17 p.m., according to the City of Columbia’s 911 fire and dispatch log.

“There was nothing in the cooler,” Weimer said. "We didn’t anticipate anything, but it’s always good to check."

Five squad cars seen near the hospital, located at 800 Hospital Drive, were blocking Hospital Drive between Deans Drive and Monk Drive. A bomb squad unit vehicle was parked on Hospital Drive about 100 feet east of Deans Drive.

Around 9:15 p.m., a remote controlled robot came from near the hospital parking lot’s north entrance and was loaded into the bomb squad vehicle.

The police cars left the scene around 9:30 p.m.

“We just wanted to check it out and make sure everyone’s safe,” Weimer said.

Missourian assistant city editor Rebecca Berg contributed to this report.
Federal grant enhances Missouri Telehealth Network's virtual health care

COLUMBIA — New federal grant money improves resources for communities without access to health care, according to the Missouri Telehealth Network.

The Department of Health and Human Services awarded more than $60,000 to enhance the Missouri Telehealth Network's interactive videoconference health care program, which serves patients in rural and urban areas lacking doctors, said Rachel Mutrux, director of the network.

"This brings health care to the patient," Mutrux said.

With the grant, the network will be able to train more doctors, specialists and nurses to use technology allowing under-served patients greater access, she said.

The network, based at MU, has partnered with the University of Kansas Medical Center and the University of Oklahoma to form the Heartland Telehealth Resource Center.

The resource center establishes a connection between existing telehealth resources in Missouri, Kansas and Oklahoma. This facilitates health care access to areas that are otherwise lacking, said Natalie Fieleke, spokeswoman for the MU School of Medicine.

In the three states, 90 percent of the counties are rural, and more practitioners equal greater access, Mutrux said.

Currently, the Missouri Telehealth Network operates 200 sites where doctors can communicate with patients in 58 Missouri counties. The network has provided 26,000 patients with videoconference health care service and completed 105,000 radiology exams.
COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

Columbia sober ride services aim to curb drunk driving

By Patrick Henseler, Walker Moskop
September 17, 2010 | 6:01 p.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — Every weekend, hundreds of drinkers pour out of Columbia's bars looking for a safe ride home.

Two sober ride services — STRIPES and Zingo MU — are working to improve the available options.

STRIPES, which offers free rides to MU students, is receiving $12,000 from a Missouri Department of Transportation grant given to MU's Wellness Resource Center, STRIPES director Matt Wheeler said.

The goal is to use the money to increase the number of cars in STRIPES' fleet from 10 to 16 over the next three semesters, Wheeler said.

"In the last three weekends, we have set and broken multiple records for volume," he said. "This past Saturday, we gave one MU student a ride home every minute from 10 p.m. till 4:30 a.m."

The popularity of the service often makes it a challenge for students who call late at night to get rides.

"Every night, the wait times get upwards of two hours ... and that's when people (calling for rides) hang up the phone," Wheeler said.

Although STRIPES will be able to increase the number of students it serves, Wheeler said he doesn't expect wait times to change.

Though Zingo doesn't offer the same free-ride system as STRIPES, it does provide an exclusive service in Columbia — employees drive your car home for you.
After a summer break, Zingo will resume giving rides Saturday night.

Here's how it works: A person needing a ride calls Zingo, and an employee riding a Di Blasi motorbike will come to meet the customer at his or her car. The 64-pound folding bike is packed into the trunk, and the employee drives the customer home.

Drivers usually arrive within 15 minutes of a customer’s call, said owner Jon Gray, but depending on distance and time of night, waits can reach up to 30 minutes. He recommends calling an hour in advance to request a ride.

The cost for a ride is $5 for an initial pickup and an additional $1.25 per minute.

When temperatures drop, Zingo will begin using cars instead of motorbikes, Gray said. Two employees will drive to meet customers, and one will drive the customer's vehicle while the other will follow in a Zingo car.

Gray said he believes people's not wanting to leave their cars behind for the night is a cause of many DWIs, which motivated him to start Zingo MU in 2009.

Another reason was his response to a friend's death in an alcohol-related car accident.

“This isn't a job that I thought I would get rich doing,” he said, “but personally seeing how DWIs can ruin a friend’s life, I think this is a job worth doing.”
Whether you're a football fan or not, in Columbia, we all have a little Tiger (bigger for others) inside that brings us all together. There's something about the magic that happens on Faurot Field that is simply intoxicating. That's why all the recent off-the-field distractions are raising more questions, producing less answers, and letting judgment be thrown around entirely too easily.

Some members of the MU football family, team and coaching staff have had some serious run-ins with the law in these past few months, with the most controversial charges surrounding former tailback Derrick Washington. Currently awaiting separate arraignments on a class C felony charge of deviate sexual assault stemming from an incident in June, and a misdemeanor charge on suspicion of third-degree domestic assault, Washington was indefinitely suspended from the football team and now, is no longer enrolled at MU for the fall semester.

This rapid rise and fall of Washington evokes three names: Ben Roethlisberger, Michael Vick and Ricky Clemons.

Roethlisberger, quarterback for the Pittsburgh Steelers, just had his league suspension reduced from six games to four, after violating the NFL's personal conduct policy. Roethlisberger has been accused of two separate sexual assaults in the past two years, not including a third potential sexual assault accusation where the supposed victim did not come forward.
Granted, he was neither arrested nor charged in either situation, though a civil suit was filed following the first incident.

According to an ESPN report, Steelers President Art Rooney said, “Ben has done a good job this summer of growing as the person that he needs to be, both on and off the field. I am confident that Ben is committed to continuing in this positive direction.”

Really? Roethlisberger was ordered to undergo “comprehensive behavioral evaluation by medical professionals.” However, I didn’t know you have to undergo counseling for being innocent, or being in the wrong place at the wrong time, or associating with people you shouldn’t have — all claims Roethlisberger has made. So, what exactly was he being evaluated on?

Was Michael Vick, former quarterback of the Atlanta Falcons and now a Philadelphia Eagle, afforded the same “comprehensive behavioral evaluation by medical professionals” with his 19-month penitentiary stay in Leavenworth, Kan.?

Yes, Vick admitted guilt and accepted plea agreements in both his federal and state cases for dog fighting, prompting his jail sentence, in addition to two months of home confinement and three years supervised probation. Yes, Vick knowingly gambled while fighting, torturing and killing dogs.

No, Roethlisberger was never charged in either incident, but we can ponder if he was charged, might he have accepted a plea bargain? And no, we don’t know what happened in Lake Tahoe, Calif., or Milledgeville, Ga.

I won’t venture into the whole humans versus dogs firestorm, but I will ask, did Vick’s punishment — prison, bankruptcy, complete loss of livelihood, embarrassment, mockery, and a form of banishment — fit the crime? By no means am I absolving Vick of his transgressions or excusing his horrendous behavior, I’m just seeking a little perspective.

Let’s explore some of the stark differences between Roethlisberger and Vick such as; one pleading guilty and the other not even charged, one with championships and the other without, one white and one black. I can’t help but believe that race played some factor in the public’s opinion, and furthermore in their damnation of one player and not the other.
If Vick’s fall from grace is a direct result of his admitted guilt in a court of law (though he did his time), while Roethlisberger remains in the public’s good graces as a direct result of his lack of guilt, as determined by that same legal system (twice), something just doesn’t add up.

It doesn’t add up because the same Vick dynamic is happening to Washington, though his story and situation is more along the lines of Roethlisberger. Washington, facing a sexual assault like Roethlisberger, in addition to the domestic violence charge, has been arrested, though not formally arraigned; yet the public has already begun passing judgment.

Unfortunately our opinions—we the public judge and jury, could be ruining this young man’s life. This isn’t the NFL, and he doesn’t have a personal relations person to redeem his image once the smoke clears. If he’s found guilty of these two incidents in the court of law, then the public has the right to banish him like we did Vick. But until the courts decide, why isn’t Washington being afforded the same non-judgment that was afforded to Roethlisberger?

If there is a reasonable difference between the two beyond the considerations of fame, fortune and race, I’m not seeing it.

Before Washington unenrolled at MU while still on scholarship, and before any verdict was handed down, the MU athletic department seemed to create a distance between itself and Washington. Did the athletics department try to reach out to Washington with some Roethlisberger-style behavior evaluation following the June incident? Did the athletics department invest in the 21-year-old as a person, and not just as a dollar sign? Or, are we so scarred from Clemons that we dare not let another athletic debacle happen, especially not involving another black athlete.

Clemons, as you may remember, is the former MU men’s basketball player, found guilty of two misdemeanors for choking his girlfriend. He also had a series of ridiculous jailhouse conversations with the wife of then-University President Elson S. Floyd, Carmento Floyd; allegedly took money from coaches; and helped seal the deal for the NCAA placing the program on probation for three years.

We should be apprehensive after surviving the Clemons incident, but not paranoid or righteous in regards to our current treatment of Washington.
Just like Vick, Clemons and Roethlisberger, I’m not sparing Washington from these accusations that could be true, and therefore beyond reprehensible. And if so, he will deserve any punishment plus some handed to him. But the key word at this point is, accusations.

He hasn’t been found guilty (or even formally appeared before a judge yet), so let’s pause in our castration and let the law do its job.

Jennifer M. Wilmot is a graduate student at MU and a Columbia resident.
COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

Proposal would put medians in College Avenue crossers' paths

By Thomas Nagel
September 18, 2010 | 10:21 p.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — The Columbia City Council will vote Monday on whether to seek grant money to build medians on some parts of College Avenue.

While area schools are in session, there are more than 3,800 pedestrian crossings per day on College Avenue between University Avenue and Rollins Street, according to a report prepared by Tim Teddy, Columbia's planning and development director.

A majority of those crossings, more than 2,000 of them, are by jaywalkers, according to a report by consultants Crawford Bunte Brammeier, a firm that specializes in traffic engineering. City planners are trying to change that.

A proposal calls for building waist-high medians down the middle of College Avenue between University and Rollins to block jaywalkers from crossing.

“One of the points is to channel pedestrians to where drivers expect them,” said Mitch Skov, a planner in the city's Department of Planning and Development.

Channeling that flow would be two crosswalks, 15 to 20 feet wide, one between Wilson Avenue and Rosemary Lane and another about 50 feet north of Bouchelle Avenue.

The crosswalks would connect the East Campus neighborhood with existing pathways at MU. The report suggests that the nonalignment of campus paths and East Campus streets leads to diagonal crossings and pedestrian traffic within turn lanes.

These patterns and the volume of daily foot traffic have sometimes put pedestrians in danger.

“Instances where pedestrians darted between queued vehicles into lanes with moving traffic were numerous,” the report said. “It must be acknowledged that some motorists fail to react to the presence of pedestrians.”

The report even describes how a motorist struck a pedestrian while consultants collected field data in September 2009.

“There’s a perception of danger there. Drivers are stressed,” said Michelle Windmoeller, director of communications for PedNet Coalition, in reference to the project. “We’ve all heard of instances of near misses.”

Since 2005, there have been 11 collisions between pedestrians and cars on the stretch of College Avenue where the medians would go. Eight of those incidents occurred at the intersections with Rollins Street and University Avenue.

“There’s more interactions between cars and people at intersections,” said Windmoeller of the statistic.

The proposal is the brainchild of MU, rather than the city.

Former Missouri Students Association President Jordan Paul approached Gary Ward, MU’s assistant vice chancellor for facilities, about the issue in 2009. Ward then commissioned the study of pedestrian safety along College Avenue, said Karlan Seville, communications manager of MU Campus Facilities.

Ward took the study’s recommendations to the Missouri Department of Transportation and to the city. Both supported the plan, but no funding was available at that time.

In January 2010, MSA passed a resolution calling for the construction of a new crosswalk in the area “as soon as practically possible.”

On Sept. 1, MoDOT announced the availability of $2.6 million for improvements to roads in central Missouri. The application deadline for grants is Sept. 30, leaving little time for public comment.

That comment period could be critical considering the range of opinions on the issue.
“It’d be hard to get to class,” said freshman Zac Crase, who lives on College Avenue where the changes are being proposed.

Sophomore Regan Cousidins said the matter wouldn’t affect her, “because I have to walk down that way towards Rollins to the nursing school.”

On Wednesday, the Bicycle and Pedestrian Commission discussed the plan and endorsed applying for a grant for it.

There will be time allowed for public comment prior to Monday’s vote.
Listen to Republican campaign ads in Missouri’s hard-fought U.S. Senate race and their message is clear: Robin Carnahan and Barack Obama share far more than the identical birth date of Aug. 4, 1961.

They are ideological soul mates. Political twins. “Rubberstamp Robin.”

“Over the past 18 months, Robin Carnahan has announced her ‘rubberstamp’ support for every major component of the reckless Obama agenda,” the GOP has contended.

Carnahan rejects those claims. She and fellow Democrats brand as inaccurate several other charges that her Republican opponent, U.S. Rep. Roy Blunt, has made in recent weeks. One accuses her of failing to stand up to ACORN, the community activist group that became a lightning rod for conservative criticism.

Carnahan’s campaign counters that Republicans are simply trotting out the tried-and-true political tactic of tying her to a president whose poll numbers have plummeted.

“I’ve always been independent and looked out for the interests of Missouri families,” Carnahan, Missouri’s secretary of state, said this week. “That’s what I’ve done in my current job and that’s what I’ll do in the United States Senate.

“He (Blunt) doesn’t have anything else to talk about. So I see why he’s doing it.”

She also insisted that she did not always agree with the president: “Some things I agree on; some things I don’t. To me it’s not about whether Obama is proposing it, it’s about whether it’s good for Missouri families and good for our country.”

Carnahan said Blunt consistently voted with President George W. Bush.
Blunt "has been a rubberstamp for the policies that got us into this mess in the first place," she said.

Obama apparently gets the message. In July, when he stood next to Carnahan at a fundraiser at the Folly Theater in Kansas City, he noted that Carnahan would not go to Washington to "represent me, although she’s a great friend."

“She’s going to Washington for only one reason — to represent one constituency, and that is the people of Missouri,” the president said. “She will call them like she sees them, and she sees them the way … most Missourians do.”

Still, the phrase “Rubberstamp Robin” has emerged as a key one in Carnahan’s race against Blunt, even though she has never served in Congress.

Republicans pointed out that she supported the health care bill, the stimulus package, the pro-labor card-check legislation, the closure of the Guantanamo Bay prison, the selection of Elena Kagan to the U.S. Supreme Court, and an oil-drilling moratorium.

Should voters be surprised? Probably not, according to some political observers.

“She’s a Democrat, so there’s going to be a certain amount of ideological lineup between her and Barack Obama and other Democrats,” said Shari Bax, a University of Central Missouri political scientist. “We would expect that. If that’s not there, you’d have to question why she even has a Democratic label.”

Carnahan has taken several steps, however, to distance herself from some of Obama’s agenda. Bax said that move was just as calculated as the GOP’s efforts to tie Obama to Carnahan.

“When the president is riding high, everybody wants to be just like him,” Bax noted. “When he’s not, they try to differentiate themselves.”

Carnahan opposed the 2008 bank bailout bill, a position that has put her at odds with many Democrats as well as with Blunt, who helped corral Republican votes for the bailout known as TARP (Troubled Asset Relief Program).

But recently, she has taken two high-profile stands that put her at odds with Obama. Most notably, in August she came out in favor of extending the Bush tax cuts, even for the wealthiest Americans. Obama wants to extend them only for the middle class.

“I don’t think now’s the time that we do something that’s going to dampen small-business job creation and getting our economy moving again,” she said.

Last week, Carnahan said she opposed Obama’s call for a $50 billion investment in roads and bridges to create jobs.

Not “very practical,” she said.
So whether the “Rubberstamp Robin” tag is fair or not is in the eye of the beholder, said University of Missouri political scientist Peverill Squire.

In a bitter campaign, fairness may be beside the point, he noted. The tag is effective from a political standpoint, he said he believed, because of the way it brands Carnahan.

“Anytime you can come up with something pithy that people remember, it tends to work,” Squire said.

Further criticisms

Besides the rubberstamp claim, Blunt and Republicans have criticized Carnahan for:

• Not standing up to ACORN, which in 2006 submitted fraudulent voter registration forms in Kansas City and later pleaded guilty to federal charges. The group, now defunct, was accused of the same thing in St. Louis.

“You have an obligation to stand up right in front of ACORN to say what you’re doing is wrong,” Lloyd Smith, executive director of the Missouri Republican Party, said of Carnahan.

Carnahan disputed that: “As soon as we found out about it, we suggested that it get fully investigated and people be held accountable for their actions.”

Smith, however, contended that Carnahan went easy on ACORN because the group worked primarily to elect Democrats.

Carnahan’s camp countered that she had repeatedly asked for increased penalties for voter-registration fraud, only to be rebuffed by the GOP-led General Assembly.

“I say anybody who violated the election laws needs to be prosecuted, and we won’t tolerate it — ACORN and anybody else,” Carnahan said.

• Having brothers who worked as lobbyists when her late father, Mel Carnahan, was governor.

Democrats have pounded Blunt for working on legislation that benefited a company that employed Blunt’s lobbyist son, as well as a lobbyist who later became his wife.

Republicans have countered that two Carnahan brothers — Russ, now congressman from St. Louis, and Tom, a lawyer — lobbied during their father’s administration from 1993 to 2000.

That is false, Robin Carnahan said. Russ Carnahan was registered as a lobbyist for BJC Health System, but he did not lobby the executive branch.

Tom Carnahan, she said, did not lobby during her father’s administration.

State records confirm that Tom Carnahan was not registered as a lobbyist during that time.
"I take this as an affront on behalf of my father," Robin Carnahan said of the accusation against her brothers. "He would never have allowed for a family member to take personal advantage or to have personal gain out of his position."

The GOP could not produce any evidence that Mel Carnahan's sons received special favors as a result of their connection to the state's highest office.

"Robin Carnahan has tried to make exaggerated attacks about lobbyist connections a cornerstone of her campaign, but she desperately hopes Missourians forget that she comes from a family of political insiders and lobbyists," Smith said.

• Supporting corporate subsidies, even though she has been a critic of the Wall Street bailout.

A Blunt statement noted that when Carnahan worked in Washington for four years at the Export-Import Bank of the United States, "she helped give away corporate subsidies."

The bank helps American companies export their products overseas through the use of loans and credit.

Carnahan began working at the bank in 1993, the year her father became governor. She was a special assistant to the bank's chairman.

"She was a good problem-solver," said her former boss, Kenneth Brody, who now runs a New York investment firm. "She'd see some issues and hop on them. We were expanding small-business lending. We were opening up the risks that we were taking. She was just involved in a lot of issues."

The Blunt campaign has accused her of being part of an effort to outsource U.S. jobs.

Brody argued that the opposite was true. He said the institution financed the export of American goods and services, which opened up new markets to U.S. companies, creating more jobs at home.

"They (the Blunt campaign) got it exactly backward," Brody said.

Still, organized labor — one of Carnahan top contributors — has been critical at times of the bank's actions.

Thea Lee, deputy chief of staff for the AFL-CIO, said hypothetically an American company building a steel plant overseas creates jobs at home with the help of Export-Import Bank. However, once that plant is built, she said, the foreign steel could end up competing with domestic steel and undermining American jobs.

"But ... there is a general sense that (the bank) is not involved in outsourcing," Lee said.

**Ballot issue problems?**
As secretary of state, a post she has held since 2005, Carnahan is responsible for writing ballot summaries for initiative petitions. But the GOP contends that courts have “consistently” rejected the summaries because of their biased language.

Republicans pointed to three cases in which a judge rejected Carnahan’s ballot language: one involving affirmative action in 2008, another in 2008 that focused on stem-cell research, and a third in 2009 involving affirmative action.

The stem-cell case centered on a proposed constitutional amendment banning a certain type of embryonic stem-cell research. “Insufficient and unfair,” a judge in the case called Carnahan’s ballot summary.

Carnahan was trying to “confuse Missourians and hurt those she disagrees with,” the GOP’s Smith said.

Carnahan’s office pointed out that 202 initiative petitions have been submitted during her years as secretary of state, with those numbers rising dramatically each election. Fifty-eight lawsuits were filed, with Carnahan losing only the three cases that Republicans cite.

“Time and time again, judges found that our language was fair and sufficient,” a Carnahan spokeswoman said.

Blunt had a similar experience in 1990, when he was Missouri secretary of state. A Cole County Circuit Court judge said Blunt provided insufficient wording for the title summary of a ballot question concerning a state constitutional amendment to protect abortion rights.