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ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

Missouri legislators spar over budget

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NO MU MENTION

JEFFERSON CITY • Missouri lawmakers have until Friday to approve a spending plan for the coming year, but issues over funding for programs that serve key populations — aging veterans, children and the blind — remain unresolved.

After working on the budget in private last week, House and Senate negotiators on Monday agreed on funding plans for most items in the budget, including a pay raise for state workers. But millions of dollars remain in limbo as lawmakers approach Friday's constitutional deadline.

Budget leaders "have an issue that is kind of tying up this budget," House Budget Chairman Ryan Silvey, R-Kansas City, said during Monday's meeting.

The problem: how to pay for the state's seven state-run veterans' homes. The House has approved a plan that would shift \$30 million in casino entrance fees to create a dedicated revenue stream for the veterans' homes. The casino money currently goes toward early childhood education programs. To replace it, the proposal calls for early childhood programs to receive some of the money supplied by a national settlement with tobacco companies.

But the Senate has declined to approve the plan after getting bogged down in debate over unrelated issues attached to it.

The logjam has created a domino effect that may lead to more cuts in other areas, warned Silvey and Senate Appropriations Committee Chairman Kurt Schaefer.

"There are a number of things that — if that bill doesn't pass — we're going to have to revisit and probably cut," Silvey said.

Instead of the House plan for veterans' homes, the Senate has been pushing a version that would prohibit funding for a preschool quality rating system and shut down the University of Missouri-St. Louis' Sue Shear Institute for Women in Public Life. Sen. Jane Cunningham, R-Chesterfield, has said that program is too partisan, favoring Democrats.

"This is all about taxpayer dollars going to an organization that promotes certain beliefs," said Sen. Will Kraus, a Republican from Lee's Summit who is on the negotiating committee.

Silvey said the language on the Shear institute could prove hard to pass in the House, based on conversations he has had with members.

Rep. Sara Lampe, a Democrat from Springfield who also is on the budget negotiating committee, defended the program and said it is not partisan.

"It's about women," she said. "It's open to any woman who wants to attend."

Lawmakers are trying to resolve differences between the two chambers' plans for a \$24 billion budget for the fiscal year that will begin July 1. Despite repeated delays, Silvey remained optimistic.

"We're right close to the finish line," he said.

Under the budget agreements reached so far, state employees who make \$70,000 or less would receive 2 percent raises beginning July 1.

Lawmakers also have agreed to increase funding for a program that helps low-income families pay for child care — a move that officials say will help prevent drastic cuts to services.

The Department of Social Services estimated that 3,860 children would lose subsidized child care and another 2,330 would face a drop in state support if the Legislature doesn't provide a \$10 million increase.

The House had provided the full funding in its budget, but the Senate's recommendation was for half that amount. But on Monday, Senate budget writers agreed to the full amount.

Still, differences remain in other budget areas.

Legislators have not resolved funding for programs that encourage private day care and preschool expansion. The House's version of the budget would provide nearly \$13 million, but the Senate recommended eliminating the funding and transferring that authority to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Meanwhile, the Senate recommended full funding for a \$28 million program that provides health care coverage for blind Missourians who do not qualify for Medicaid, while the House recommended sharp cuts in the program.

Some have proposed a new program that would require recipients to pay premiums and co-pays.

"That might be something that we discuss," Silvey said.

Advocates for the blind oppose any cutbacks or program modifications.

Deanna Noriega, who is blind and has a part-time job at Services for Independent Living in Columbia, said she went into the blind health care program last year when she lost her insurance coverage.

"I need to work, but that puts me over the income limit" for Medicaid, Noriega said.

Faced with a new health care burden, Noriega said people in similar situations might decide to quit their jobs so they can qualify for Medicaid, though she said that wouldn't be an option for her.

Her husband does not work because of health reasons. Their daughter and three grandchildren also live with the couple near Fulton, so Noriega said she's trying to help provide for a family of six and keep up with her mortgage payments.

"I can't afford to quit," she said.

Cigarette tax

The case against

By Henry J. Waters III

The argument that turns me off the most when higher cigarette taxes are proposed is the No. 1 reason the American Cancer Society supports the current move under way for a November vote to hike per-pack taxes in Missouri.

The most important aim of the higher tax is to increase the price so fewer young people start smoking, says Misty Snodgrass, director of governmental affairs for the society.

Manipulating taxes to blatantly affect consumer behavior is antithetical to a free marketplace system. Raising taxes to keep people from buying a legal product is a tactic most of us would oppose on its face. Moreover, we are wise enough to oppose prohibition of tobacco products, knowing that would create a destructive black market. So we peek our noses under the tent with higher cigarette taxes, state by state.

In this race Missouri comes in last — or first, depending on your perspective. Missouri's 17-cent tax is lowest in the nation. If voters approve a 73-cent hike in November, ours would equal the average of eight surrounding states, enough to raise the ire of Ron Leone, executive director of the Missouri Petroleum Marketers and Convenience Store Association.

"We will definitely be opposing the outrageous and unreasonable 429 percent tax increase," he says, pointing out the new tax would destroy a competitive advantage that Missouri sellers now enjoy and would lower state sales and fuel tax revenue. Snodgrass says higher tobacco taxes never have caused reduced state tax revenues.

Promoters of the increase also cite increased revenue for targeted programs. They think the higher taxes would produce \$283 million to \$423 million annually. Their initiative would earmark half for public school programs, **30 percent for higher education** and 20 percent for smoking cessation.

At a time when state revenue is short, this promise sounds good, but beware of allocation promises. Just because hundreds of millions from new funds are specified for public education does not mean public education budgets will increase that much. Ditto for higher education and smoking cessation.

The reason is familiar. Tax money from sources such as tobacco taxes or lottery proceeds earmarked for larger budget items like education end up as part of general revenue because the legislature will shift money it otherwise would appropriate. The extra money will abet general revenue, but nobody can predict how much will end up in particular accounts.

I'd like it better if expected proceeds from such tax increases were not earmarked at all, but experts who plan these initiatives believe voters prefer spending promises even if they are misleading.

The most sensible rationale for approving the cigarette tax increase is simply to raise state revenue, but this initiative suffers from inherent problems afflicting all such narrowly targeted taxes: It interferes with the free exchange between buyers and sellers of legal products and affects competitive positions among various sellers.

There are better ways to raise state revenue, but many voters will favor higher cigarette taxes because they don't smoke, think it's a good idea to punish those that do, believe it's all right to use tax policy to dissuade people from smoking and/or generally like the idea of raising state revenue with higher taxes on products they don't use.

They might not accept Leone's argument about the plight of tobacco and motor fuel sellers near state borders and, in any event, don't feel their pain. They just anticipate a gain.

Twice in the recent past, Missouri voters have turned down similar requests, but by small margins. If the issue makes it to the ballot this year, the renewed tussle will again be close. Missouri's need for state revenue is more palpable, but the electorate is noticeably more conservative and anti-tax. Most voters won't care primarily about the issue that bothers me most: imposition of a culturally biased tax to negatively affect individual behavior.

HJW III

COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

Resort-like student apartment complexes expand with rising MU enrollment numbers

MU Mention on pg. 2

By [Karen Miller](#)

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COLUMBIA — College forces most students to throw off the shackles of living with the folks and move out on their own. They quickly learn to cook, clean and do their own laundry.

These days, students in Columbia can also swim, play tennis and work on their golf swings and their tans while living in an amenity-rich apartment complex.

Columbia has seen more and more student-centric apartment complexes built over the past decade. These complexes often come with many amenities and are a transition space between traditional apartments and community-oriented residence halls and Greek houses.

The life of a college student is transient. MU junior Kaity Ferretti lived in the Pi Beta Phi sorority house as a sophomore but decided to move to Brookside Townhomes at Old Plank Road and Forum Boulevard. Next year, she'll live in the apartments across Ninth Street from the journalism school so she can be closer to campus.

There are positives and negatives to living at Brookside Townhomes, Ferretti said. She often has no cell phone service. Although she enjoys lying by the pool, she said the deck is often littered with beer cans on weekends and the water is sometimes murky.

On the positive side, the complex's gym is being renovated, and the Brookside bus makes it easy to get to campus. The bus runs until 2 a.m. on the weekend and makes downtown nightlife accessible.

Ferretti is moving downtown but said Brookside's downtown apartments are too expensive.

"It's not really necessary for me to have a rooftop pool in college," she said.

MU sophomore Lisa Kossover spent the past school year living at The Cottages of Columbia on East Nifong Boulevard near Bearfield Road. Kossover moved to The Cottages because they were attractive and had many features. She visited friends at the complex when she was a freshman and enjoyed the atmosphere. Because she doesn't have a car, she depends on roommates and city buses for rides.

Kossover is leaving The Cottages for East Campus because campus will be closer and the rent cheaper. She also said The Cottages' rules are lax. Visitors often use the pool and tanning beds, for example.

Columbia as a market

Rob Dann lived in a “ratty house with three guys” when he was a student at the University of Denver. Now, as executive vice president for Campus Crest Communities, he sells the “college experience” he didn't have to students in Columbia and around the United States.

Campus Crest opened The Grove at Grindstone Parkway and Rock Quarry Road in 2011. Dann called it a 632-bed “mini city.”

Dann said his company builds in college towns where universities:

- Are “underserved” in housing options.
- Are experiencing enrollment growth.
- Have enrollments of 7,500 to 15,000 students.

Columbia has far more college students than other communities where Campus Crest usually builds, but Dann said MU is underserved when it comes to housing them.

MU Residential Life Director Frankie Minor said off-campus apartment complexes create more opportunities for students and ease the pressure on MU to find room for students. He doesn't see the developments as competitors.

“I think those markets are going for the students who have already decided that they don't want to live on campus anymore or, in some situations more recently, that have a desire to live on campus, but we just can't accommodate (them),” Minor said. There are only a few students who want to live on campus that MU can't accommodate, he said.

Developers sometimes contact Minor to talk about enrollment figures and to get a feel for students' housing needs. For example, he told developers several years ago that they should provide quality Internet service because students were choosing campus housing for its broadband access.

There are developers "...who are in this for the long-haul... building good quality facilities, but they realize they're going to earn their money over a period of time," Minor said. "Then I think there are developers coming in who are... trying to capitalize on the market and trying to get as much of their investment back as quickly as they can and then re-sell that property."

Apartments are marketing to a different type of student than the Department of Residential Life.

"This ain't your mama's house no more," The Grove's website reads. "We think college living should be as exciting as college itself. Your home shouldn't just be a space to cram for exams while eating day-old pizza. Why settle when you can have off-campus, resort-style amenities where you can study, eat, socialize and relax in style?"

Accommodating an influx of students

Minor has been director of Residential Life since 1994. He said that in most years, MU has been able to accommodate incoming students. Occasionally, though, it has had to make special arrangements.

In 2003, dormitories at Stephens College housed incoming freshmen that MU couldn't accommodate. And in fall 2008, when MU experienced record enrollment and the largest freshman class in its history at that time, Residential Life was about 700 beds short. So it rented beds from off-campus developments Campus View and Campus Lodge.

"We thought this one spike in the freshman class was just a one year anomaly, (but it has) established a new kind of norm," Minor said. It regularly sets new records for numbers of on-campus freshmen.

As enrollment continues to increase, Residential Life restricts the number of returning students in order to ensure it has space for freshmen. Beyond freshmen, preference for on-campus housing is based on seniority.

Residential Life is still renting apartments known as Tiger Diggs, a group of apartments at Campus View, for freshmen. This fall, it will need an additional 350 to 450 spaces. The department rents only four-bedroom apartments to freshmen.

Some parents and students are unsure about moving from home to an independent, apartment lifestyle. Being off campus means freshmen are farther away from classes, dining halls and campus social activities.

"We still think the main campus experience is the better experience for our (first-year) students, but we also have a number of freshmen who are very eager to get out to Tiger Diggs," Minor said. "They want that independent lifestyle."

About 95 percent of students have their own room at home — and about 60 percent have their own bathroom before moving away to school, Minor said. Sharing a dorm room with a roommate is stressful for some students.

"Many of them have never had to share a space with somebody," Minor said.

Tiger Diggs is a transition space from home to university. It has the same contract, employees and programs as traditional on-campus housing with the amenities of a larger student complex.

A new trend in housing

Given cuts to university budgets and the expense of providing housing, the market for apartment developers is strong.

"It's a great time to be in student housing," Dann said.

The marketing strategy at Campus Crest is to sell an experience, as well as a lease. Most of the various "Grove" brand apartments follow a similar layout, which allows the company to keep the look, feel and experience of their properties consistent. If you were to compare The Grove in Columbia to The Grove at Eastern Washington University in Cheney, Wash., Dann said, the complexes would be the same.

In Columbia, many of the apartment complexes have a similar look and feel. A cluster of four, large apartment complexes stands along Old 63. A worn, brown fence and a hill of green grass is all that separates Copper Beech Townhomes from Grindstone Canyon. Across the street,

The Reserve at Columbia is nestled in next to Campus Lodge. About 2,243 residents occupy these four student complexes.

Large apartments are not entirely new to Columbia. In 2000, residents of the Walnut Woods mobile home park were evicted to make way for Jefferson Commons — now known as The Reserve at Columbia.

Dallas-based apartment developer JPI built Jefferson Commons. Later, Education Realty Trust of Memphis, Tenn., acquired the property and renamed it The Reserve.

More apartments are on the way on the south and east sides of town. Aspen Heights plans to build apartments for 936 residents on the former site of Columbia Regency Trailer Park, and Asset Plus plans to house 648 students at The Domain on the Crosscreek property.

Finding the right complex

With so many options for students to find a complex and a "college experience," The Wellness Resource Center began the Off-Campus Housing Department five to six years ago, center Director Kim Dude said. The Wellness Resource Center publishes an off-campus housing guide every May. Last year, it distributed about 4,000 copies of the magazine, off-campus coordinator Kristi Eftink said. It also has a website for students interested in living off campus.

“(The magazine is) aimed to create a well-rounded and informed tenant,” Eftink said. The magazine includes tips on budgeting, grocery shopping and information on local laws, and housing companies advertise in the magazine. The Wellness Resource Center puts on a housing fair for students interested in living off campus. This is the first year there has been a housing fair both semesters, Dude said. At the February fair, students wound their way around tables offering plastic cups, T-shirts and pencils. Some students putted golf balls while others talked to apartment representatives about applications.

Living — and studying — in luxury

A trend in student housing is luxury apartment complexes, such as The Domain at Crosscreek. Amenities such as pools and hot tubs have become standard in off-campus complexes.

“There’s a greater push for amenities to attract more students because there has been such a big push with new off-campus housing,” Eftink said. “The amenities attract the students.”

“You don’t see an apartment complex without a pool” these days, Dann said. The Grove throws pool parties and hosts events such as Taco Tuesday to foster community, he said.

Campus View, where Tiger Diggs is located, is renovating its complexes. Apartments are furnished with leather couches and arm chairs, a 37-inch television and a full-size bed. The clubhouse at Campus View also has leather furniture with tiger print throw pillows. Students gather there to study, play foosball and watch movies. Dann wants The Grove brand to be a place that fosters a sense of community, not one where the rent is cheap. That type of living and learning environment is what makes The Grove different and helps the brand succeed, Dann said.

Other apartment complexes also market an experience to students. Chris Moore, leasing manager for The Cottages, used to live in Brookside Townhomes before he moved to The Cottages and took a job there. Moore didn't enjoy his time at Brookside, describing it as "too generic, kind of bland." Moore, who now lives and works at The Cottages, enjoys living in a place that feels more like a neighborhood community than just an apartment complex.

Students in the community

The Wellness Resource Center is in the business of teaching students how to be good neighbors. Its role is to educate students about how to live a healthy and safe off-campus lifestyle. One concern in large complexes is partying and underage drinking.

“We got increasingly concerned about our students' health and safety,” Dude said. “We wanted to figure out a way to educate our students to be good neighbors.” The city passed a nuisance party ordinance in 2006. Since it went into effect, parties have become tamer, Dude said. When police interrupt a party, they can slap an expensive ticket on the leaseholder.

“The parties in Columbia have gotten much more reasonable than they used to be,” Dude said.

The Wellness Resource Center does “walk and talks” at the beginning of each fall semester. Staff members go door to door in areas such as East Campus and deliver bags filled with pamphlets offering information about living off-campus.

Eftink is excited to do her first “walk and talk” in August. As a public health master's student, she relishes the task of talking with students about healthy lifestyles. At many large student complexes, the resource center is prohibited from going door to door, so the staff visits bus stops to hand out information packages to students commuting to school. The materials have

been well received by the complexes; many are planning on making them available to their residents.

Downtown District

Student apartments are springing up not only along Old 63 and at Crosscreek but also downtown Columbia. Brookside Downtown opened in August 2010 at 10th and Locust streets, and the owners, Jonathan and Nathan Odle of Trittenbach Construction — the same people who built Brookside Townhomes — are building more apartments at College Avenue and Walnut Street and at 10th and Elm streets.

Meanwhile, Travis McGee of Certified Realty is building yet another complex, The Lofts at 308 Ninth, immediately south of Chipotle. Jeff Pernikoff planned to build another complex at Locust and Hitt streets, at and next to the site of the former Memoir night club, most recently Salty's Bar and Grill, but his plan to buy the building fell through. Zoning for the project remains in place. Carrie Gartner, executive director of the Downtown Community Improvement District, said the influx of housing creates a lively, diverse downtown. Gartner said downtown is particularly attractive for student residents.

"It's so much easier to live here in the district and walk to campus," Gartner said.

While downtown areas in other cities operate on a 9-to-5 schedule, Columbia is creating a balance of day and night residents, she said. Finding the balance between students and professional residents is key, Gartner said. Downtown merchants have always catered to students, given that they're surrounded by Stephens College, Columbia College and MU. Gartner cited women's clothing retailers and bars as examples. Still, she said, those businesses don't "shut out everybody else. It's a matter of balance."

Gartner believes downtown still needs more residential space.

"We can absorb a lot of apartments here," she said.

"The more people we've got here in the district ... the better it is for us."

Supervising editor is Scott Swafford.