Schools could see cuts if tax cut veto is reversed, Nixon tells educators

No MU mention

By Rudi Keller

Tuesday, July 30, 2013 at 2:00 pm Comments (2)

Gov. Jay Nixon used an annual state-sponsored education conference Tuesday to continue his attacks on a tax cut bill being touted for an override vote by business groups and Republican legislative leaders.

Nixon accused the drafters of working to undermine education by providing massive tax breaks to wealthy Missourians. "These tax breaks for what is called 'pass-through business income' primarily benefit lawyers, lobbyists and other business partnerships, not to mention the creative accountants who do their taxes," Nixon said.

Nixon has been traveling the state almost daily defending his veto. Supporters of the bill are countering with a $2.4 million ad campaign, underwritten by wealthy conservative activist Rex Sinquefield, promoting the bill as a panacea for the state's economic woes.

"Right now, one reckless experiment, cooked up in my opinion by a few special interests, bankrolled by one very wealthy individual, threatens to take us irretrievably off course," Nixon said. He spoke to the Cooperative Conference of School Administrators, a two-day conference sponsored by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Nixon said under two scenarios prepared by the education department, the bill would cost schools $260 million to $450 million from current funding. He has already held back $400 million from spending in the coming year, including more than $100 million from education programs. "I would love nothing more than to be able to get the dollars that we have already restricted, especially in the education sector and others, out in the communities where we could make good progress," Nixon said.

The biggest uncertainty in the bill would be triggered by passage of a federal law mandating Internet and catalog sales companies to collect state and local sales taxes on purchases. If such a law passed before Dec. 31, it would force an immediate reduction in income tax rates.
Opponents of the bill claim that if those tax cuts took effect before Dec. 31, they would trigger refunds of taxes paid over the past three years and pull $1.2 billion from state coffers in the current fiscal year. Ray McCarty, executive director of the Associated Industries of Missouri, said worries about massive refunds are misplaced.

The Missouri Constitution wouldn't allow it because lawmakers can't pass a bill altering tax rates for past years, he said. Congress is unlikely to pass the law this year, he said, and a test case on the refunds likely would go to the Supreme Court, where McCarty is sure it would be rejected.

The top tax rate "would be reduced immediately, but it would not allow refunds for previous years," McCarty said.

To bolster his argument that the bill hurts the state, Nixon yesterday released reports from two bond-rating agencies on a plan to refinance debt for the Edward Jones Dome in St. Louis. The reports, from Moody's Investors Service and Standard & Poor's, both said they would re-evaluate the state's AAA credit rating if the veto were overridden.

An override would create uncertainties in the state's ability to meet its obligations, the agencies said.

Columbia Public Schools Superintendent Chris Belcher, who attended the conference, said local districts will be faced with a bad choice if the bill results in funding cuts. Districts with good economies and a strong tax base can, as Columbia did two years ago, ask voters for money to replace the loss, he said.

Districts without the ability to raise local taxes would cut jobs and programs, Belcher said. "There will be winners and losers in that scenario," he said.

Nixon asked the administrators to lobby lawmakers to oppose the override. "While this won't be the last time we must defend the values we share, this is the ground we must fight on," Nixon said. "This is the battle we must win because this is the moment we will look back on as defining our future or sealing our fate."

*This article was published in the Tuesday, July 30, 2013 edition of the Columbia Daily Tribune with the headline "Governor defends his tax cut veto: Schools could see big reductions, Nixon says."

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Posted in Politics on Tuesday, July 30, 2013 2:00 pm.
Consortium pushes ahead on small nuclear reactor efforts

Nuclear energy effort continues.

By Karyn Spory

Tuesday, July 30, 2013 at 2:00 pm

Two University of Missouri campuses with experience in the nuclear energy industry will conduct research as part of a consortium on small modular reactors.

The consortium, founded by Ameren and Westinghouse Electric Co., will be led by the Missouri University of Science and Technology in Rolla, with a satellite center in Columbia at MU. Joseph Smith, who holds the Laufer Chair of Energy at Missouri S&T, will serve as executive director.

Small modular reactors, or SMRs, have been of interest in Missouri as a potential driver of new industry and research. The reactors, smaller than current nuclear power plants, are expected to be more cost-effective, and a proposal by Ameren and Westinghouse last year to build one in Missouri failed to draw initial federal funding. However, the parties involved, including UM, have not given up on pushing such a project forward and are awaiting further word on the next round of funding.

The Small Modular Reactor Research and Education Consortium will initially focus on key areas including establishing computer-aided engineering tools to evaluate SMR design and operation, helping regulatory agencies to develop SMR licensing, and supporting the development of materials, research and technology for SMR design.

"The consortium as a whole will work together on projects that are specific to each company," Smith said.

Smith said there are many companies with potential to become members of the consortium, and he could see the University of Missouri-St. Louis and the University of Missouri-Kansas City as members in the future as well.
Last year, the U.S. Department of Energy announced plans to award as much as $452 million to design and build SMRs. DOE had plans to give two awards, but in November it gave a single award to the Tennessee Valley Authority and Babcock & Wilcox.

Although Ameren and Westinghouse's proposal for a Missouri project lost out on the first bid, Rob Duncan, vice chancellor for research at MU, said there was already talk of another solicitation for major funding from the federal government for SMRs.

"That solicitation has come … and in fact, we are an associate with Ameren and Westinghouse again in a proposal that we hope will prevail this time," Duncan said.

The next round of funding from DOE is expected to be around $150 million, and Smith said he hopes to hear something back by early September.

The consortium received a $250,000 grant from the Missouri Technology Corp., a public-private partnership created by the Missouri General Assembly to promote entrepreneurship and foster growth of high-tech companies. According to a news release, the grant will be used to establish and enhance the consortium, initially providing a 50 percent match for consortium membership fees.

"The state is very appropriately making sure that once this major effort in SMRs design and construction gets going that we anchor the financial benefits and the jobs, as best we can, here in Missouri," Duncan said.

This article was published in the Tuesday, July 30, 2013 edition of the Columbia Daily Tribune with the headline "Schools lead SMR alliance: Nuclear energy effort continues."

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Posted in Education on Tuesday, July 30, 2013 2:00 pm.
COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

MU, Missouri S&T announce small modular nuclear reactor consortium

By Brendan Gibbons
July 30, 2013 | 7:45 p.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — This week, the University of Missouri System declared its intention to work with the energy industry to promote small-scale nuclear power plants.

On Monday, the UM System announced a partnership among Ameren Missouri, Westinghouse Electric Co. and two UM campuses to conduct research related to small modular nuclear reactors, or SMRs.

In the announcement, system President Tim Wolfe said the partnership would support a small modular reactor "renaissance for the nuclear industry."

According to the U.S. Department of Energy, small modular reactors are miniature nuclear power plants with the capacity to generate 300 megawatts or less of electricity. They can be mass-produced in a factory and shipped by truck or rail.

Joseph Smith, director of the Energy Research and Development Center at the Missouri University of Science and Technology in Rolla, said these reactors can be strategically placed to augment conventional and renewable energy sources to help meet demand.

"You could think about that just like you think about a hybrid automobile," Smith wrote in an email. "SMRs could become part of a hybrid energy system that combines legacy fossil energy (i.e., coal gasification) with renewable energy (i.e., wind or solar)."

Smith said the consortium had its kickoff meeting Wednesday in Pittsburgh. Representatives from Ameren, Westinghouse, MU and Missouri S&T were among those present, he said.

Ameren and Westinghouse each put forth a $60,000 annual membership fee. Smith said Westinghouse is an ideal consortium partner because of its AP1000 reactor technology that has already received Nuclear Regulatory Commission approval.

"That's the gold standard," Smith said of the AP1000 reactor.
Westinghouse and Ameren are already partners in the nuclear industry. The nuclear reactor at the Callaway Nuclear Power Plant is a Westinghouse reactor.

In April, Westinghouse and Ameren declared they would continue to pursue $226 million in Department of Energy funding for small modular reactors. The companies had applied for an earlier round of funding worth more than $450 million but lost in November to a team comprising Babcock & Wilcox Co., the Tennessee Valley Authority and Bechtel Corp.

Missouri Technology Corp., a nonprofit entity established by the Missouri General Assembly to promote science and technology development, also will put forth $250,000 in funding over three years.

The Missouri Technology Corp.'s board of directors approved the grant at its June 28 board meeting, said Amy Susan, director of marketing and communications for the Missouri Department of Economic Development.

One of the consortium's goals is to increase membership to five in three years and 10 in five years, Smith said. He said the consortium has the potential to attract members from a variety of industrial sectors, including manufacturing, reactor vendors and transportation. Other universities can also join the consortium.

"The opportunity to leverage its investment is a key benefit for consortium members," Smith said. "A bigger and more significant issue is consortium members can join the team of industries involved in the SMR supply chain."

Smith developed a PowerPoint presentation about the consortium based on a funding proposal to the Missouri Technology Corp. In it, he listed seven areas of focus for consortium research:

- Design and modeling
- Infrastructure
- Manufacturing
- Materials
- Nuclear fuel
- Systems
- Education and outreach
Smith emphasized the economic benefits for Missouri if this consortium helps lead to more widespread adoption of small nuclear reactors. He said it could lead to jobs in manufacturing, operation and transportation, to name a few.

The nuclear industry already holds plenty of job opportunities for students who receive proper training, he said.

Missouri S&T and MU each operate research reactors and offer nuclear science and engineering programs. Several undergraduate senior capstone teams at Missouri S&T have produced projects relating to small modular reactors, Smith said.

"I think it's a great opportunity for the companies but more importantly for the students," Smith said. "Workforce training is a big deal for this consortium."

*Supervising editor is Elizabeth Brixey.*
Jefferson Farm hires director, addresses debt trouble

New approach may find help in food industry.

By Laura Mazurak

Tuesday, July 30, 2013 at 2:00 pm Comments (2)

After a yearlong suspension of programming, Jefferson Farm is set to reopen in September under new management and with an expanded focus on food systems.

Mark Clervi, a commercial real estate consultant and investor, was officially hired July 1 as farm director.

The not-for-profit educational farm, located on 67 acres owned by the University of Missouri off New Haven Road, opened in 2006 as a destination for school trips and the site of experimental crop research. In its early years, Jefferson Farm was well-funded, receiving more than $2 million in grants from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Monsanto, MFA and other public and private entities. But by 2011, the organization's financial situation had soured; funding had been dramatically cut, leaving Jefferson Farm with a nearly $900,000 mortgage.

In June, board President Jerry Nelson expressed uncertainty over the future of the farm, but new leadership and the farm's expanded interests have kept Jefferson Farm afloat. Nelson now says the farm will become a research and educational site for processes related to food systems, including agricultural production, preservation, processing and nutrition.

"Because of our expanded interests, it opens up different ideas of programs we can offer," Nelson said. "Types of funding will be similar, but the spectrum of potential funders will be expanded. The food industry could have a bigger role."

Nelson said restaurant chains, grocery stores and food product companies such as Coca-Cola are interested in food systems research, so they could become potential sources of grants for the farm.

Clervi said that in the midst of controversial food issues, such as the genetic modification of crops, he hopes Jefferson Farm will be a "valued source for reliable information."
Along with new programming, Clervi and the five-member board of directors have restructured the farm’s debt with IFF, a not-for-profit lender.

"We will grow carefully and responsibly within our resources," Clervi said. "That's something you learn in the business world."

Clervi, who attended MU before earning a master's degree in business administration at the University of Texas, spent a 20-year career in Southern California real estate. In 2011, he said, he moved back to Columbia for a change of pace and to be closer to family. Clervi spent 2012 working at Pierpont Farms — co-owned by his college roommate, Rob Hemwall — where he developed an interest in agriculture and food resource issues. Along the way, he discovered Jefferson Farm.

"Mark more or less found us," Nelson said. After several other organizations and private individuals expressed interest in the struggling farm's future, the farm's five-member board settled on Clervi as director.

"The main thing was his commitment, background in business and his leadership experience with fundraising and managing," Nelson said.

While Clervi's position is paid, Nelson hopes community volunteers will help with the farm's educational programs and its maintenance. There are plans to add a part-time education coordinator and farm manager later in the year, but staffing will be low compared with past numbers. In 2008, 11 employees collected $980,000 in salaries and benefits.

The board also will see changes. Nelson said it will expand from five to seven members this year, with new members gradually replacing the current board. Instead of looking to academia for guidance — all current board members have held agricultural research positions at universities — Nelson said he hopes the positions will attract business leaders and members of the health and food industries to reflect the broader purpose of the farm.

On a recent weekday, Clervi spent his afternoon in a T-shirt and work gloves weeding a day lily bed. The humidity was low for July, and the farm's lake reflected the cumulus clouds overhead.

"I was a deal maker, a suit-and-tie guy," Clervi said, surveying the property. "This beats a corner office in Los Angeles any day."

This article was published in the Tuesday, July 30, 2013 edition of the Columbia Daily Tribune with the headline "Jefferson Farm plans turnaround: New approach may find help in food industry."

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Posted in Local, Education on Tuesday, July 30, 2013 2:00 pm.
MU aide Smith dies

Longtime assistant showered players with "tough love."

By Joe Walljasper

Tuesday, July 30, 2013 at 2:00 pm

Harry Smith, a Missouri assistant football coach under Don Faurot and Dan Devine and a fixture in his golf cart on the sidelines during practices in the Gary Pinkel era, died Tuesday morning in Columbia at the age of 94.

Smith's daughter, Judy Huff, said her father had been in declining health in the last few years after a stroke.

Smith was an All-American lineman for Southern California in 1938-39 and played for the Detroit Lions in 1940. He became an assistant coach at Missouri for the first time in 1941, and after a series of other jobs — including serving as head coach of the Canadian Football League's Saskatchewan Roughriders — he returned to MU and coached from 1952-66.

Among his duties was coaching the Tigers' freshman teams.

"Just his presence demanded respect," said Skip Grossnickle, who played at Missouri in the mid-1960s. "You had to walk a very straight line. There was no varying off of that. He was a hard-nosed coach but yet with a lot of compassion. He cared about his players.

"Harry Smith was the Total Person Program back then. He really was. He made sure you were in class, made sure you made your grades and made sure you performed on the football field."

After his coaching days, Smith became a professor of health and physical education and was MU's intramural director from 1973-83. He retained his no-nonsense stance toward academics.

"He was a very direct, straightforward person," said Columbia's Ken McClure, who took PE classes from Smith and worked for him in the intramurals department in the 1970s. "We always said there was the university's rules and then there was Coach Smith's rules. One of his rules was you couldn't get an 'A' in his class if you missed one day of class the whole semester. For the PE majors, we actually had class with him five days a week for one hour each day."
"One year, I was surprised I didn't get an 'A,' and I went to Coach Smith at the end of the semester. He said, 'Mac, you missed a day of class.' I said, 'I know. My uncle passed away, and I told you I had to go to the funeral.' His comment was, 'Well, I'm sorry for that, but I still can't help you. You missed class.'"

McClure said he appreciated Smith's "tough love."

"If you did it Coach Smith's way and did the things he required, then he would forever have your back and give you a recommendation for a job or anything like that," he said.

Smith reconnected with the Missouri football program after Pinkel took over as coach in 2000. The two became friends. Smith frequently watched practices from a golf cart.

"Coach Pinkel made an effort — very much so — to include him," Huff said.

Smith was born in Russellville in 1918, and his family moved to Ontario, Calif., in 1920. Among his many honors, he was inducted into the College Football Hall of Fame in 1955 and the University of Missouri Intercollegiate Athletics Hall of Fame in 2002.

Smith is survived by his wife, Mabel, and his two children, Huff and Harry Smith Jr. Huff said this morning that funeral services had not yet been set. She asked that in lieu of flowers to contribute to MU's Harry Smith Athletic Scholarship Fund or the charity of your choice.

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Posted in Mu Football, Tigerextra on Tuesday, July 30, 2013 2:00 pm.
Harry Smith, longtime Mizzou assistant, dies at 94

15 hours ago • By Dave Matter dmatter@post-dispatch.com 314-340-8508

COLUMBIA, Mo. • Missouri has released a few statements on the passing of longtime assistant football coach Harry Smith.

First, from athletic director Mike Alden: "We are saddened to learn of the passing of Coach Harry Smith and wish to send our deepest condolences to his entire family. Coach Smith was a visible fixture around Coach Pinkel's football program over the past decade and was someone that embodied the spirit of Mizzou, not only through his coaching under Coach Don Faurot and Coach Dan Devine, but with his work on campus, and most importantly, through his mentorship of his student-athletes. The University of Missouri mourns the loss of a great man and college football Hall of Famer today, and our thoughts go out to his family, their friends and the many student-athletes he impacted along the way."

Also, football coach Gary Pinkel: "I'm very sad to learn of Coach Smith's passing. I'm really proud that I personally had a chance to get to know him over the years, what a great life he lived. He had an unbelievable impact on so many people in and out of football, just a tremendous influence on all of the people he touched. I think being able to have Coach Smith be part of our program has been one of the highlights of my time at Mizzou, it's been really special to be around him and to talk to all of his players and to see how much he meant to them. Mizzou lost one of its greats today, and I lost a good friend, we're going to miss him dearly."

Longtime Missouri assistant football coach Harry Smith, a member of the College Football Hall of Fame, died today, the Columbia Daily Tribune first reported. Smith would have turned 95 next month.

Smith, an All-American offensive guard at Southern California in 1938-39, coached at Mizzou under Don Faurot and Dan Devine, first joining Faurot's staff in 1941 after they met in Chicago at an all-star game. After taking on other jobs, including a stint at his alma mater and later coaching the Saskatchewan Roughriders of the Canadian Football League, Smith rejoined the Mizzou staff in 1952 and coached the Tigers through the 1966 season. After retiring from coaching he taught physical education at MU into the 1980s.

The Tigers were 97-63-10 during his time on the coaching staff and won conference titles in 1941 and 1960.

"He was so well respected because he accomplished so much as a player," said former Missouri offensive lineman Merv Johnson, who later coached alongside Smith on Devine's staff. "He was a fabulous physical specimen of a lineman. He could do things none of us could do. He was so strong. He had a good
sense of humor, but he was pretty stern about you staying on the right track. He was just a pretty doggone good role model."

Look for more on Smith in Wednesday's Post-Dispatch.
In Missouri, campaign donors fund phones, sports tickets, golf balls

JEFFERSON CITY It's good to be an elected official in Missouri, with new computers, iPads, car repairs, luxury travel, even golf balls paid for by political donors.

A Post-Dispatch analysis of political campaign expenses this year has found that — even in a nonelection year — contributions to candidates can translate to perks for officials.

Under Missouri's campaign finance law, campaign contributions cannot be "converted to any personal use." But funds can be used for expenses that are related to campaign activities or — once someone is elected — the duties of his or her office.

And state law specifically allows donor-contributed money to go toward "entertaining of or providing social courtesies to constituents, professional associations or other holders of elective office."

Legislative and statewide officials therefore often turn to their campaign coffers to pay for a wide range of personal expenses that, they argue, are associated with their official or campaign duties:

• **Gov. Jay Nixon, a Democrat who is term-limited, spent $10,220 from his campaign fund on University of Missouri sports tickets this year. He also spent $487 on gifts from Augusta National, the Georgia golf club that annually hosts the Masters.**

• **State Rep. Casey Guernsey, R-Bethany, used $5,500 from his fund to pay for a trip to Brazil with the Missouri Chamber of Commerce and Industry.**

• **State Sen. Ryan Silvey, R-Kansas City, was among several legislators to buy a new computer with campaign funds this year, and he charges about $138 a month to his campaign for cellphone usage.**

Officials argue that the expenses are legitimate. Moreover, they point out, charging donors is better than charging taxpayers.

"I don't believe the taxpayers should have to pay for travel for elected officials, so I'm certainly not going to use any variety of tax dollars to pay for it," Guernsey said.
Based on the Post-Dispatch review of campaign finance reports filed this month and in April, consulting fees and associated costs have made up the bulk of state and local campaign committee expenses — even among legislators and statewide officials not up for election this year.

Meals, payroll, travel and fundraising events — including costs associated with ever-popular golf tournaments — also were among the major expenses for candidates and elected officials.

Members of the state House and Senate receive a base yearly salary of $35,915, plus a $104 daily allowance during session to cover travel and other out-of-pocket expenses. Statewide office holders make from $86,484 (lieutenant governor) to $133,821 (governor) annually.

But there is also a lifestyle boost that comes with holding elected office, and it mostly comes through outside money — campaign funds and freebies from lobbyists.

Missouri places no limits on campaign contributions, which means some elected officials and lawmakers at the top of the ladder can maintain hundreds of thousands of dollars in their funds — even in an off-year — and use that money to supplement costs that they would otherwise have to pay out-of-pocket.

This year, officials have used their campaign funds to buy new computers, iPads, passports and event tickets and to cover seemingly routine expenses.

Combined, campaigns paid more than $31,000 to cellphone companies from April 1 to July 1 to cover phone and data plans, and $26,000 went toward subscriptions to newspapers and online news services.

More than $17,000 was spent on contributions to various charities, which is allowable under the state campaign finance law as long as candidates and their families receive no direct financial benefit in return.

Stacey Heislen, acting executive director of the Missouri Ethics Commission, said reports are spot-checked to make sure that the law is followed — including reasons offered for expenses.

“"We definitely look to see if it is something that would fall within someone supporting their campaign or that it does somehow relate to their official duties,” she said. “"We do review those expenditures as best we can.”

The Ethics Commission in May fined former state Sen. Robin Wright-Jones, D-St. Louis, for allegedly spending $14,169 in campaign funds on personal items, including nearly $1,800 at a Creve Coeur clothing boutique, $362 for “Scottrade tickets” and more than three dozen trips to Schnucks. Wright-Jones did not testify during the commission's hearing, and she is expected to appeal the ruling.

Her case, in particular, has raised questions of what expenses are allowed under the state’s broad law.
Nixon campaign spokesman Oren Shur said the governor’s campaign paid for the Mizzou tickets because he “hosted donors and supporters in his (basketball arena) box for various games.”

The gifts from Augusta National also went to donors, Shur said, which would fall in line with state law.

Guernsey, who chairs the House Agriculture Committee, said his trip to Brazil focused on agriculture trade.

“Brazil is a very important economy — not only worldwide but to the state of Missouri,” he said. “Agriculture is their No. 1 industry, just like the state of Missouri’s is.”

He said that he and other lawmakers and business leaders who went on the trade trip met with officials there and discussed issues including “how Brazil’s output impacts Missouri’s commodity prices directly.”

“It’s probably one of the top contributing factors to our prices in Missouri,” he said.

It’s not unusual for legislators to accept paid trips to other states or countries. Often, the trips are reported in their yearly personal financial disclosures, or occasionally in lobbying reports.

Guernsey said he was offered a paid trip but decided to use his campaign fund instead because he views the trip as an official duty as a state lawmaker.

In recent years, some have sought to reform Missouri’s campaign finance law and cap contributions.

Guernsey said he disagrees with those efforts.

“I think we have one of the better systems,” he said. “It is completely open and transparent. Every dollar that is received is accounted for. You know exactly how much money is being donated from every entity, individual or business.”

Silvey said strict rules that bar the use of official equipment for campaign purposes mean lawmakers have to walk a fine line that leads to additional campaign expenses.

“There’s a strict separation of what you can do with official equipment and what you can do with campaign equipment,” he said. “If want to correspond in campaign way — I don’t want to have that in any way coming from a state computer.”

Silvey, one of the Legislature’s more tech-savvy members, said he also is actively involved in the design of campaign communication.

“I have a very hands-on approach,” he said.
All 163 seats in the House will be up for election next year, and 17 seats in the Senate — half the chamber.

Silvey, who served eight years in the House before moving to the upper chamber this year, said that the two-year terms in the lower chamber means constant campaigning for those who want to keep their seats.

“It’s always coming right up, every other summer,” he said. “My approach is to spend as little as I can get by with when I’m not in the middle of a campaign.”

Silvey, who doesn’t face re-election until 2016, used $425 from his campaign fund in May to help a school group pay for a trip to the Capitol. He also used his campaign to buy pizza for the group.

“When they called and said they weren’t going to be able to do it — I decided I wanted to help out,” he said, noting that he didn’t actively publicize the payment, which appears in his July finance report. “I just wanted them to come down.”
Plant Science Center plans $45 million expansion

NO MENTION

Tuesday, July 30, 2013 | 4:23 p.m. CDT; updated 8:00 p.m. CDT, Tuesday, July 30, 2013
BY JIM SALTER/The Associated Press

ST. LOUIS — The Donald Danforth Plant Science Center in suburban St. Louis has a $45 million expansion plan that includes the construction of a new building that would accommodate more than 100 new researchers.

The center, in Creve Coeur, said Sunday that it plans to break ground early next year on the three-story building. The new center adds 80,000 square feet of space to the current 170,000 square feet. Construction is expected to be completed by the end of 2015.

The Danforth center is a not-for-profit research institute that seeks to help humans through plant science. Work is funded through grants and revenue from sources that include the National Institutes of Health, the U.S. Departments of Energy and Agriculture, the Bill & Melinda Gates and Howard G. Buffett foundations, and others.

The addition will include flexible labs and accommodate robotics and other advances in research.

"The center's expansion project is a major step in our long-range plans to increase our impact through plant science," center President James Carrington said Monday. "The new addition will improve the capacity for high-level science in crop improvement, bioenergy, sustainable agriculture and plant biology. The new facilities will also help attract the best scientific teams as we expand in the years ahead."
The Missouri Development Finance Board has approved $4.5 million in tax credits for the project. Gov. Jay Nixon said in a statement that the expansion "will create jobs and spur growth in this region, and generate new technologies to help feed and fuel communities around the world."

St. Louis County Economic Council President Denny Coleman said in a statement that the Danforth center "consistently attracts new, world-class talent to the St. Louis region."

The center's current building houses 227 employees. In addition to the latest expansion, the center also plans to complete an addition to its current greenhouse later this summer.
Satirical article creates stir in Wyoming town

CASPER, Wyo. — A spoof on radio frequency identification chips created real concern for some readers and dubious national attention for the small southern Wyoming coal mining town of Hanna.

The calls began pouring into Hanna Town Clerk Vivian Gonzales' office early Monday morning. Was a local ordinance really requiring its government-assisted citizens to be implanted with identification chips?

The callers' anxiety stemmed from an article on a website called National Report, which claimed Hanna was part of a federal health care pilot program, and that the town mayor, "Ted Howell," was the first recipient of an RFID chip.

"I've had people call from all over the U.S., from citizens to pastors to doctors, asking if this is really true," Gonzales said.

By Monday afternoon, Gonzales had screened about 50 callers from states such as Vermont, Florida, Tennessee, Alabama and Washington, many requesting a word with the mayor. A caller from Minnesota told her the story had been picked up by a Bible prophecy radio show.

Gonzales said everything in the article, down to the mayor's name, was a fabrication.


The publication, which reads like the lovechild of Weekly World News and The Onion, offers a disclaimer: "All news articles contained within National Report are fiction, and presumably fake news. Any resemblance to the truth is purely coincidental."

The site's other recent headlines reported that Kate Middleton gave birth to a fourth "puppy" and that pets of gay couples are worse at sports. Many of the articles assume an ironically fanatical conservative tone.

The Hanna article's subject matter plays off a viral rumor that the new federal health care law would soon require all citizens to have a microchip implanted. The myth-busting website Snopes lists some examples of such claims and references the Hanna debacle in a recent update.
Commenters on the post ranged from those who apparently believed the article’s content, to those who ridiculed the aforementioned group, to those who penned disjointed diatribes on loosely related topics.

Sandra Davidson, a communications law professor at the University of Missouri School of Journalism, said it’s doubtful any legal action will come of the story, even if some take it seriously.

"If it can't be taken as literally true, it can't be defamatory," she said. "In this country, we have a broad First Amendment right to satire."

Davidson said even if the article is lifted out of satirical context, a plaintiff would have to prove some sort of injury in order to file a lawsuit. She did not know of an instance in which a town claimed it was libeled.

"Perhaps the people who were duped by this are the ones who should feel more injured," she said.
A former part-time lecturer at the University of Missouri-Kansas City says in a lawsuit against three university officials that his class was cancelled because he refused to give preferential treatment to an athlete.

Henry Lyons is suing Missouri-Kansas City chancellor Leo Morton and two other school officials. He claims that in 2011 the university gave a passing grade to student-athlete who had failed one of his courses. Lyons challenged the grade change, but it was not reversed. The student's name has not been released.

The Kansas City Star reported (http://bit.ly/14fFuAR) Monday that the NCAA eventually cleared the school of any rules violations for the grade change.

Morton said he had no comment on the lawsuit. Missouri-Kansas City is not a defendant in the lawsuit.