Mo. initiative would let student curators vote

18 hours ago • By DAVID A. LIEB

Rebuffed at the Missouri Capitol, college students may turn to the statewide ballot to try to win voting rights for their representatives on the governing boards of public universities.

A proposed ballot initiative made public Tuesday would give students a vote on tuition rates and other policy decisions that come before university governing boards. The measure is targeted at the November 2014 ballot.

Missouri law already allows a student representative to sit on the board of each of Missouri's public universities. Those students currently can attend meetings and participate in discussions but don't get to vote on matters.

"Students are bearing increasing proportions of the costs of their higher education _ they're paying more tuition, they're having to borrow more," said St. Louis attorney Brad Ketcher, who submitted the proposed ballot initiative to the secretary of state's office. "It's high time that they had a full voice on their university boards when issues like tuition and fee increases come up."

Ketcher declined to identify his clients backing the initiative.

From 2008 to 2013, Missouri's inflation-adjusted, per-student funding for higher education declined by $2,013, or nearly 30 percent, according to the Washington-based Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. During that time, the average inflation-adjusted tuition at Missouri's public universities rose by $388, a little over 5 percent, according to the center. That was one of the lowest tuition hikes in the nation.

Supporters of voting rights for student governing board members have tried for more than a decade to pass such measures in the Legislature. They came close in 2008, when then-Gov. Matt Blunt vetoed a bill that could have given a vote to a student on the University of Missouri Board of Curators.

Blunt, a Republican, said the legislation was "riddled with problems" and would have given one segment of the university _ the students _ a stakeholder interest on a nine-member board whose voting members are supposed to consider the best interests of the university as a whole. The veto came after the University of Missouri Board of Curators voted 7-1 to oppose the legislation.

One of the curators at that time was Doug Russell, who also was chairman of the Missouri Republican Party. Russell had said the bill would have created "a biased constituent seat" on the curators.
Corbin Evans, the executive director of The Associated Students of the University of Missouri, said the organization wasn't involved in drafting the proposed ballot initiative but has long-supported efforts to allow student curators to vote.

"The problem with not having a vote is that we don't have that guarantee that our voice is going to be equally heard with the rest of the curators," Evans said.

Secretary of State Jason Kander is taking public comments about the initiative from Tuesday through Saturday. The office then will have 10 days to draft a summary that would appear on the initiative petitions and _ if enough signatures are gathered _ on the ballot.

Students could play a significant role in gathering the tens of thousands of needed signatures from registered voters. To qualify for the ballot, initiatives need signatures equaling 5 percent of the number of votes cast in the 2012 gubernatorial election in at least six of Missouri's eight congressional districts.
Initiative petition seeks voting rights for student curators

By Rudi Keller

Tuesday, October 8, 2013 at 2:00 pm

After decades of legislative frustration, supporters of voting rights for student representatives on the University of Missouri Board of Curators and other state university governing boards want all voters to decide the issue.

An initiative petition filed by St. Louis attorney Brad Ketcher, chief of staff to Gov. Mel Carnahan in the 1990s, was posted for public comment today on the website maintained by Secretary of State Jason Kander. The form of the petition has been approved by Attorney General Chris Koster, and the comments will help as Kander is writing the ballot question that would go before voters.

Citing attorney-client privilege, Ketcher declined to say who had asked him to prepare the petition. "There are folks who think it is time they deserve a full vote on the board," he said.

A student representative, without voting power, was added to the Board of Curators and the governing bodies of other state colleges and universities in 1986. The governor appoints students for a two-year term — regular curators hold their posts for six years — and the seat rotates among the four campuses of the UM System.

The proposal came closest to passage in 2008, when it was approved in both chambers of the General Assembly but vetoed by then-Gov. Matt Blunt. The idea was considered as early as the year the post of student representative was created. Opposition then, as in 2008, focused on whether it was appropriate for a student to be voting on issues such as tuition and hiring college presidents.

The idea came up again as a solution to reorganizing board appointments when Missouri lost a congressional district after the 2010 census. Instead, lawmakers removed the restriction on two curators living in the same congressional district.

UM Board of Curators President Wayne Goode, who as a lawmaker supported voting rights for student representatives, said today that his personal views have not changed.
"It might depend a little bit on how it is written, but philosophically I am really not opposed to a student curator being able to vote," he said. "That is strictly my point of view, and I don't know what the other members think."

The board has not discussed the issue in-depth since it took a stand opposing the 2008 proposal, Goode said. "Since then, most of all of those curators who felt strongly about it are off the board, and there has been no discussion among those who are on the board."

To make the November 2014 ballot, supporters will need to gather about 100,000 signatures by May 4.

The comment period lasts five days and is designed to help identify problems and provide earlier notice to voters of the ideas being circulated, said Kevin Flannery, a spokesman for Kander.

The student representative should have voting rights because every action of the board affects them, Ketcher said. "College students are paying more and more of the cost of their education as tuition rises and state aid decreases, and it is time for those students to have a full voice on university boards," he said.
Proposal would send UM Curators student voting rights to public

By Justice Gilpin-Green

October 8, 2013 | 10:48 p.m. CDT

JEFFERSON CITY- While the Missouri legislature has closed the door on having a voting student curator on the UM System Board of Curators for more than a decade, St. Louis attorney Brad Ketcher hopes that everyday voters will open a window.

Ketcher proposed a ballot initiative Tuesday that would allow the public to vote on whether the student representative on the UM System Board of Curators — or other public universities in the state — will have the ability to vote. While there are currently student representatives sitting on the governing boards of many public universities in Missouri, these students do not have the ability to vote.

Ketcher, who was chief of staff to Gov. Mel Carnahan for three years, said he has been watching this issue for a long time.

"One thing that we're missing now is students being responsible for higher loan obligations," Ketcher said. "Students have to pay more and more in tuition and have to take on more and more student loans. It's time students are given a voice. So that's what this proposal would do."

This is not the first attempt to add a student vote to the curators, however. Starting in 2007, there has been a new failure to gain support in the legislature every year. In 2008, a bill sponsored by then-Sen. Chuck Graham, D-Columbia, made it all the way through the Missouri Senate. However, the UM System Board of Curators called an emergency meeting and voted 7-1 to oppose it and soon afterwards, Gov. Matt Blunt vetoed the bill. That was the closest students had ever come to getting a vote with the board.
In a 2008 press release after the veto, Graham blamed "a political crony" for why the bill failed. He specifically pointed a finger at one former curator, Doug Russell, who was chairman of the Missouri Republican Party and who Graham said influenced Blunt's decision.

"This veto is just another example of why it's a bad idea to politicize the Board of Curators," Graham said in a press release at the time. Now, with Ketcher's petition, the students could take their pleas to the people.

"One way is to get a law through the legislature," Ketcher said. "The other way is to go through a public vote. I think everyday voters would approve a measure that gives students a voice over their tuition and other important university operations."

The petition, which Ketcher calls a "huge undertaking," still needs to be approved for circulation by Missouri Secretary of State Jason Kander. In a process that Ketcher expects to take about three to four weeks, Kander will look it over to see if it is in the right format and develop ballot language. Missouri State Auditor Thomas Schweich will develop fiscal plans for the ballot initiative as well.

Once the petition is approved, sponsors must gather signatures from registered voters equal to at least 5 percent of the vote for governor in 2012 in at least six of the state's eight congressional districts for the petition to be put on the ballot.

Sponsors hope the issue would be on the November 2014 ballot.

Katie Steen, assistant legislative director for the Associated Students of the University of Missouri, said her organization looks forward to meeting with Ketcher to work on petition circulation plans. She plans for this meeting to take place as early as next week.

"We plan to help Ketcher gain signatures," Steen said. "We haven't decided formally how we will go about that ... Having a student vote is something that ASUM has supported for a long time."

This time, Steen believes, the fact that all Missouri public universities are included in the initiative will help the University of Missouri in the long run.

"We only represent the University of Missouri, and while that's our main focus, having support from other institutions will help us with our primary goal," Steen said. "It's definitely going to garner support from other parts of the state."
The UM System Board of Curators did not return a phone call for a comment.
Chancellor Deaton to receive Geyer Award

By Liz Henderson

Chancellor Brady Deaton will be receiving the Henry S. Geyer Award for his work with higher education and public policy.

He was selected for the award this month, along with State Rep. Mike Thompson.

Deaton was nominated by the Nursing Alumni Organization and Thompson by the Ag Alumni Organization.

Deaton said it was a great honor to be next to the names of the previous winners.

"I am absolutely honored and surprised," he said. “I had no idea I was even being considered for such an award until it came out that I had been selected."

The Henry S. Geyer Award dates back to 1992 and was first awarded to State Sen. James Mathewson and Bert Bates, a lawyer for Lathrop and Gage, LLC, for their work with higher education and public policy. State Rep. Henry S. Geyer, to whom the award is tribute, authored the Geyer Act of 1839, which established the University of Missouri as the flagship university of the state of Missouri.

The award has always been given to one state legislator and one citizen or group of citizens who have had an impact on higher education and MU. The recipients do not necessarily have to be MU faculty, staff or alumni.

Dianne Drainer, MU legislative liaison and advocacy director of the Mizzou Alumni Association, said Deaton is very deserving of this award. His work with higher education and public policy has been outstanding the past nine years, she said.

Deaton has served as chairman of the Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities and, in 2011, President Barack Obama appointed him chairman of the Board for International Food and Agricultural Development.

Under Deaton’s leadership as chancellor, MU has seen large increases in enrollment, minority student enrollment, research grants and expenditures, fundraising, and hiring of prestigious faculty. During Deaton’s tenure, MU also reduced its carbon footprint, opened 21 new buildings and transferred into the Southeastern Conference.
Last year, the award went to State Sen. David Pearce and then-juniors Steven Dickherber, Ben Levin and Zach Toombs for their work on the More for Less campaign, which protested proposed budget cuts to higher education.

Levin said he believes the award shows that people pay attention to the hard work people, like he and Deaton, do for their communities.

“It was a tremendous honor, like a validation for what had really taken up most of my sophomore year,” he said.

This year’s ceremony for the Geyer Award will be held in Jefferson City on Jan. 13, 2014. The award is given out after the beginning of the legislative session.

The general assembly, MU alumni and leaders, and friends of the university are all invited to the reception.
New director of MU Press takes aim at finances

The new leader of the University of Missouri Press says his top priority will be to get the organization's finances in order, partly by publishing more science titles.

David Rosenbaum starts Nov. 1 as director of the academic publishing house, which nearly shut down last year. University of Missouri System President Tim Wolfe wanted to close the organization but reversed that decision after it was harshly criticized by the publishing community and dozens of authors threatened to sue to return their publishing rights.

The school later decided to place the Press under control of the Columbia campus rather than the university system.

Getting the organization's finances in order will be a challenge, Rosenbaum said.

"I don't think anybody believes that, financially, the press is as stable as it ought to be," he said. "Stabilizing the financial situation is a pretty important first step."

Although he intends to maintain the Press' core of arts and humanities titles, Rosenbaum told The Columbia Daily Tribune (http://bit.ly/19x5HGD) that he wants to expand publishing into sciences and other professions.

"I think looking for titles in those areas and narrowing the focus of the editorial program are keys ways in which this operation can get more bang out of its marketing dollars," said Rosenbaum, who said releasing more titles that mirror the university's mission will raise the operation's profile.

Before being hired at the Press, Rosenbaum was director of product development and project management for the American Heart Association, senior acquisitions editor at Elsevier, senior acquisitions editor at Delmar Cengage Learning and senior publisher and production manager at the Iowa State Press.
Veterans disability benefits clinic to provide hands-on experience for law students

By Crystal Duan

Students of the School of Law will soon be able to apply classroom skills toward helping veterans obtain disability benefits.

The law school is accepting applications for its new Veterans Clinic, in which law students can participate starting Spring 2014.

The clinic will help veterans secure compensation that the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs may deny them. Students at the clinic will act as lawyers and help veterans with the appellate process, which appeals decisions the VA makes.

“(Students) will actually do practical skills, like interviewing clients, looking at medical records, formulating legal theory and writing briefs,” supervising attorney Angela Drake said. “So it will be a practical application of a lot of skills they’ve learned, and they’ll learn some new skills.”

If a veteran files a claim for benefits through a regional VA office and it is denied, lawyers step in to help them through two levels of appeal: the Board of Veterans’ Appeals and the U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims.

The clinic will help out veterans trying to file notice disagreements, or claims that will overturn the VA’s decisions, with the board of appeals. The veterans will be a part of the Mizzou Student Veterans Association as well as other MU students who are veterans.

Students in the clinic will also partner with the non-profit organization Veterans Consortium Pro Bono Program, based in Washington, D.C., to work with clients taking their cases to the Courts of Appeals.

“(When) the veteran receives the final decision from the board and he’s not happy with it, he gets in touch with us and files a notice of appeal within 120 days,” said David Myers, director of case evaluations and placement component. “We get a copy of his claim file, (and) we review it and the board decision.”

David Myers said if the consortium takes cases, they will attempt to assign them based on geographical proximity to the clinic. The organization will then send documents to the lawyers at the MU Veterans Clinic.
Drake said the clinic provides a good hands-on opportunity for students.

“The clinics are different than other law school classes because they’re experiential,” Drake said. “The student actually experiences the real clinic as opposed to the lectures as many of our classes are.”

The vision for the Veterans Clinic came about when law students Scott Apking and Larry Lambert participated in a mock court competition in Washington, D.C., in front of real judges from the Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims. The two subsequently pushed for a veterans clinic that would provide experience with veterans benefits law.

School of Law Dean Gary Myers and Assistant Dean Robert Bailey liked the idea.

Gary Myers said he was already intent on expanding the law school’s clinical programs, which currently include a criminal prosecution clinic, domestic violence clinic and a mediation clinic.

Along with the law student organization, Missouri Law Veterans Society, which Apking and Lambert are the president and co-president of, respectively, the dean decided to follow in the footsteps of a successful veterans clinic at the Chapman University Fowler School of Law.

Christopher Dunn, clinic webmaster and law student, said the clinic is a good way for students to give back to a cause they support.

“My goal in participating in the clinic is to learn how to competently handle an appeal for a veteran who might not otherwise be able to retain a lawyer who specializes in this area of practice,” Dunn said in an email. “I’ve been around enough vets and seen the real life consequences of our government’s failure to deliver on its fundamental promises made to its wounded or disabled veterans.”

Dunn, who is a Gulf War veteran and comes from a military family, said he knows of cases where the system wore people out with paperwork and delays.

“I’m looking forward to this experience, and I’m looking forward to getting back into the fight with my fellow veterans by my side,” he said. “If I can help a veteran who is getting screwed by the system, I will consider that a good day’s work.”
MU theater group takes interactive breast cancer plays to rural Missouri

LEXINGTON, Missouri — A University of Missouri theater troupe is bringing a series of short plays focusing on breast cancer awareness to several cities in outlying parts of the state.

The Columbia-based Interactive Theatre Troupe will present three five-minute shows in October, which is National Breast Cancer Awareness Month.

The initial performance is scheduled for Thursday, Oct. 17, at Lexington United Methodist Church’s Hicklin Hall in Lafayette County. The free event begins at 7 p.m. Additional performances are planned for Sedalia and Osage County but not yet scheduled.

Playwright Heather Carver is an MU theater professor and breast cancer survivor. The three short scenes feature doctor-patient interactions surrounding breast cancer diagnosis and treatment and allow for audience interaction with the performers.
In the basement of Memorial Union at the University of Missouri, Nabil El Jaouhari hovers around students in a craft workshop. As the students, who have no art background, begin their paintings, El Jaouhari can’t help but try to encourage them.

“Give it more love,” he says as a group of graduate sociology and education students learn how to paint gradients of the same color at the Craft Studio’s experimental painting class.

El Jaouhari joined the class to offer his knowledge in the experimental painting workshop taught by his wife, Mary Sandbothe-El Jaouhari, a fiber arts graduate student at MU.

Born in 1976 in Aramoun, Lebanon, El Jaouhari graduated from the Lebanese University with a diploma of superior studies in fine arts. Unlike in the playful experimental painting class, though, El Jaouhari says his schooling was a like a 9-to-5 boot camp.

“They were like the fine arts Nazis,” he said, commenting on the difference in teaching methods in Lebanon compared to the United States.

After his schooling, El Jaouhari ventured into teaching himself at an art studio. “I was teaching all these middle-aged, frustrated women how to make collages and mosaics,” he says. “It was so much fun.”

After receiving his diploma in Lebanon, El Jaouhari was planning on moving to London — a destination sought after by many of his fellow graduates — but decided to move to Columbia in 2009 after he was offered an assistantship from the Art Department at MU.

In the spring, he graduated with his Master of Fine Arts degree and now teaches private classes and works on personal projects. El Jaouhari says he misses teaching in a school setting, though, and would like to eventually have an adjunct teaching position.

This weekly photo column explores the people, places and relationships that make living in Columbia a unique and interesting experience.