The bowtie is back

Former A&M president reflects on his transition to Mizzou

By Austin Williams

On November 13, 2014

The man who helped engineer the transition to the SEC will step foot on the newly renovated Kyle Field for the first time Saturday. The bowtie is back in Aggieland.

Former University President R. Bowen Loftin returns to A&M this weekend for the Missouri football game as chancellor at the University of Missouri. Loftin said his life has not changed much since his time at A&M. Although the student body is smaller than at A&M, he said his interaction with students at Missouri is very similar to that in Aggieland.

“The special part of it has been recognizing the students here have a lot in common with my students back at Texas A&M, it’s been very special,” Loftin said. “I wasn’t sure about that, I really didn’t know many students here when I arrived. We had a bit of social media interaction before I got here and that escalated pretty rapidly. It has been very heartwarming to me to realize that again the same kinds of students tend to come to a place like this.”

Loftin said he has gone back to his roots at Missouri serving on the faculty in the physics department, but with a job as demanding as that of chancellor, he doesn’t have time to teach full-time. Loftin said he instead occasionally serves as a guest professor to talk with students about leadership.

“I do have a lot of time with students in classroom settings but talking about what I do now more than what I used to do,” Loftin said. “It keeps me in contact with students in a very direct way and gives them a chance to ask me questions about how I got to where I am, which may help them decide on their future career paths and so on.”

Reid Joseph, former student body president and industrial distribution senior, said Loftin was the same caring man in front of a large crowd as he was in a one-on-one setting. Loftin’s willingness to give up his time to help students speaks volumes of his character, Joseph said.

“He was always ready to help students in whatever way possible,” Joseph said. “Whether that was shaking their hand and talking to them, giving them advice, taking a selfie or writing them a letter of
Loftin said he continues to engage students through social media, and even though he has only been at Missouri for a short time, his Twitter following grows every day. Loftin said it took him three years during his time at A&M to gain a following in the high 20,000s, but in less than a year at Missouri he has gained 19,000 followers.

Receiving around 50 to 70 tweets from students per day, Loftin hasn’t hung up his Twitter hat yet. Loftin said he answers questions every day to make sure he can properly address an issue, observation or question that students may have about the university. Loftin said students sometimes share with him accomplishments that they have made or just tell him how they are feeling that day. “You learn a lot about the university by observing it through the student’s eyes and those 140 characters are pretty insightful sometimes,” Loftin said.

Student Body President Kyle Kelly said Loftin’s social media presence made him an iconic figure at Texas A&M.

“I was amazed on how he used social media to connect with thousands and thousands of students,” Kelly said. “I was always impressed by that.”

Loftin said his bow ties have continued to be a major theme in Missouri as he has taken on the name of @bowtieger on Twitter.

“I created the bowtieger name or handle for my Twitter account from student input actually,” Loftin said. “The students here sort of suggested several ideas, that being one of them, and I tested it with a bunch of students here and the bowtieger kind of came out as the winner.”

Joseph said he will always remember when Loftin spoke at the last Midnight Yell before his departure. Joseph said he also had the opportunity to speak that night and wore a bowtie in honor of Loftin, making the moment special for him.

Since his departure in January, Loftin said he misses A&M and looks forward to the trip back to Aggieland. Loftin said he wouldn’t miss the trip back to A&M for the world and that many people have invited him to events, tailgates, interviews and even a book signing at Aggieland Outfitters. “Lots of students have reached out to me and asked when I’m coming back, and they’re looking forward to seeing me,” Loftin said. “I am trying to find the right place to do it. Hopefully between Midnight Yell practice on Friday and being around campus a bit on Saturday I’ll have a chance to see quite a bit of the students I have been missing a lot.”

Playing a key role in Texas A&M’s movement to the SEC, Loftin said he has not had the chance to see the newly renovated Kyle Field in person and is looking forward to stepping onto the field at the game.
Loftin said A&M’s transition to the SEC was a milestone for the university and something he wished to preserve before his time was up at A&M. Loftin said his book, “The 100 Year Decision,” records his experiences at the helm of the SEC transition, highlights the events of A&M’s surprising 2012 football season and gives some history about the road to the SEC conference. Aggieland Outfitters has invited Loftin to do a book signing Friday afternoon from 4-6 p.m. Loftin said he has signed about 1,100 stickers for the books in preparation for the event.

The relationships formed with students have always been a unique aspect of Loftin’s legacy. Larisa Escorza, animal science senior, said she remembers joining Loftin on a university visit to her hometown while talking to him about her experiences, background and future goals at Texas A&M. “He gave me advice and followed me on Twitter to keep in touch,” Escorza said. “I love his affability and genuineness.”

Shaun Bruner, history senior and cadet, said Loftin was always friendly with the Corps of Cadets. “If he ever saw some cadets eating alone in Sbisa, he’d join them and ask them how they were doing,” Bruner said. “He always cared about them as the keepers of the spirit.”

Amanda Montoya, health senior at A&M, said the first time she saw Loftin in his bowtie she pointed and said, “He’s so cute.” Montoya said he was such a good sport as he smiled and waved at her. Joseph said whomever becomes the next A&M president has big shoes to fill due to the love that was shown through everything Loftin did at the university.

“All the time he invested, the stuff that he went above and beyond in,” Joseph said. “There’s nothing in the requirements that said he had to attend all the sporting events that he did or be present with the students, having that time and making that time.”

Loftin said he will always remember the love he experienced at Texas A&M.

“I loved the students at Texas A&M, I still do, and I had a love back at me as well and that was very special,” Loftin said. “You can’t really create that, it just happens. I am very fond of all of you that I had a chance to interact with ... those five years were very special to me.”
Where Wash U, Mizzou and Illinois fall in best business schools ranking

Bloomberg Businessweek has been ranking full-time MBA programs since 1985, and this year they took on the largest group of schools yet.

Three nearby schools made the list of the top 85 U.S. schools — Washington University in St. Louis, the University of Missouri and the University of Illinois.

Wash U's Olin Business School came in at No. 26 on the list, boasting a high ranking of 4 in the "intellectual capital" category, behind UCSD, Duke and Cornell. In 2012, Olin was ranked 31st.

University of Illinois came in at No. 45 on the list, losing ground from its 2012 ranking of 40.

University of Missouri's Trulaske School of Business was ranked 70th, moving down from a 56th ranking in 2012.

Schools were ranked based on a survey of student satisfaction, a survey of employers who hire graduates and the expertise of the school's faculty. Here's a deeper dive into how the surveys were weighted and what questions were on them, from Bloomberg Businessweek.
Why You Should Never Touch a Receipt With Clean Hands

Clean hands are great until someone hands you a receipt. **When people handled cash-register receipts after applying hand sanitizer, the level of bisphenol A (BPA) in their bloodstream increased as much as tenfold, according to a new study from the University of Missouri.**

It’s not entirely clear how BPA affects humans, but animal studies have shown that it can disrupt hormones that are key to brain development, says Sonya Lunder, a senior analyst at the consumer-watchdog organization Environmental Working Group. It is thought to be especially dangerous for pregnant women and children.

Thermal receipts, which are printed using heat instead of ink, use BPA as a developer. *(How do you know if it’s a thermal receipt? Rub it with a coin as you would a lottery ticket. If the paper gets dark, it’s thermal: Friction causes these receipts to change color.)* The BPA is dusted on top of the paper, which is particularly problematic because there’s nothing keeping it from rubbing off onto someone’s hands, says Lunder. Several years ago, the EWG was the first to test for BPA on receipts and found that two fifths of the 36 receipts they tested from major retailers like Whole Foods and CVS contained BPA.

This new study takes those results one step further by showing that the BPA is making its way into people’s bloodstreams, especially if they’ve recently used hand sanitizer, which contains chemicals that aid the absorption of the liquid (and anything else that happens to be on your skin). When people handled the receipts with dry hands, far less BPA stuck to their skin.

I wouldn’t call this study good news, but it does give you one more reason not to add another receipt to the graveyard in your bag. Lunder suggests getting an e-receipt if you absolutely need a transaction record and keeping an envelope in your purse where you can store any necessary paper receipts. “It keeps it from rubbing off on things in your purse,” she says. Finally, throw receipts in the trash instead of recycling them, since you don’t really want that BPA ending up in your new recycled oven mitts.
MU to host event discussing the role of race in the impending execution of Leon Taylor

Thursday, November 13, 2014 | 1:32 p.m. CST; updated 8:17 p.m. CST, Thursday, November 13, 2014

BY JOSHUA BOOTH

COLUMBIA — **Attorneys for the man scheduled to be Missouri's ninth execution this year will meet Thursday evening with state NAACP representatives to discuss the role of race in his conviction and sentencing.**

Speakers include Kay Parish, Leon Taylor's current co-counsel; Melinda Pendergraph, his former appellate attorney and friend of 20-plus years; and Mary Ratliff, NAACP Missouri State Conference president.

**Taylor's attorneys requested that Gov. Jay Nixon grant clemency** citing concerns about the role race played in his conviction. The event will discuss similar concerns, including the role of the all-white jury that convicted Taylor, who is black.

Leon Taylor was sentenced to death for the 1994 murder of Robert Newton in Independence. **According to the Kansas City Star**, Taylor shot and killed the gas station clerk in front of his 8-year-old stepdaughter. He then attempted to shoot the girl, but his handgun jammed.

Taylor was sentenced to death by a Jackson County judge in 1995 and is scheduled to die by lethal injection at 12:01 a.m. Wednesday.

The event is sponsored by the **MU Law School's American Constitution Society, Black Law Student Association**, Equal Justice Law Association, the Missouri NAACP State Chapter, Missourians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty and the Mid-Missouri Fellowship of Reconciliation.
COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

Registration opens for Columbia Values Diversity Celebration

Thursday, November 13, 2014 | 6:57 p.m. CST

BY LAURA DAVIS

COLUMBIA — A theme has been set and registration is open for the 22nd annual Columbia Values Diversity Celebration breakfast on Jan. 15. The event will feature live music, multimedia and a theatrical performance.

This year's theme, "Harmonious Voices in a Diverse Community," will be used to encourage Columbia students in grades four through 12 to submit writings. A panel will review the submissions and choose approximately 50 to display in a booklet.

Sarah Dresser, program specialist for the Office of Cultural Affairs, said that organizers wish to highlight these writings more. "Each year has had a different theme that has celebrated a different aspect of diversity," Dresser said.

Clyde Ruffin, an MU professor of theater, has been involved in the diversity celebration since it began. He will be directing an artistic performance that highlights J.W. "Blind" Boone, a ragtime composer and pianist from Columbia.

"He was an excellent musician. He was an African American and had a disability," Ruffin said. "The fact that we are also restoring his home made this the best time to present him to the public again."

Registration is open through Jan. 9. Tickets are $15 and registration is available by mail, phone or in person at the city's Office of Cultural Affairs at 300 S. Providence Road. Scholarships are available. Registration forms are downloadable at www.gocolumbiamo.com.

Nominations for the diversity awards that will be presented are still being accepted through Nov. 28. These awards recognize an individual and a group or organization that have displayed qualities that embody the teachings of Martin Luther King Jr.
Substance Abuse Advisory Commission endorses tobacco age increase, e-cigarette ban

By Andrew Denney | Thursday, November 13, 2014 at 10:48 am Comments (9)

Columbia’s Substance Abuse Advisory Commission voted Wednesday to endorse proposals to increase the minimum age to purchase tobacco products in the city to 21 and to add e-cigarettes to the city’s indoor smoking ban, despite an opponent’s questions about the legality of the age increase.

The Columbia City Council voted in September to send the two proposals, which are sponsored by First Ward Councilwoman Ginny Chadwick, to the advisory commission and the city’s Board of Health for review before the council takes a final vote on the bills.

The commission voted 6-1 with one abstention to recommend approval of the proposal to increase the minimum sales age and voted 7-0 with one abstention to recommend approval of the ban on using e-cigarettes indoors.

Commission member Joe Priesmeyer abstained from voting on both recommendations. He said his employment with N.H. Scheppers Distributing, Mid-Missouri’s Anheuser-Busch distributor, which he said does business with firms that sell tobacco, might amount to a conflict of interest.

City staff members have not finalized the bills that will be presented to the city council. Kim Dude, an advisory commission member and director of the University of Missouri's Wellness Resource Center who offered the motions to support the proposals, said the commission should decide whether it supports the concepts behind the proposals.

Dude said diminishing access to tobacco use is more effective in reducing use than efforts to educate the public about the dangers of smoking.

“Education isn’t going to change” a smoker’s “mind, but policy can,” Dude said. “Restricting access is one of the single-most significant ways that we can decrease use.”

While Dude stipulated in her motion that the increased age requirement should apply to the “purchase” of tobacco products, a report outlining Chadwick’s legislative intent says the proposal pertains to a section of the city code that regulates the sale of tobacco products, which would put the onus on retailers to follow the law.

Commission member Teresa Stephenson, who cast the sole dissenting vote on the recommendation to increase the minimum sales age, said she did not think the increase would be
effective in curbing smoking among youths and said the community should be focusing more of its resources on reducing alcohol consumption by teenagers.

“I’m not sure, in the end, that we’ve made a good decision,” Stephenson said after the meeting.

Ron Leone, executive director of the Missouri Petroleum Marketers and Convenience Store Association, which is opposed to the legislation, has argued that increasing the minimum age for tobacco sales would run afoul of state law.

In state statutes regulating tobacco sales, a “minor” is defined as a person who is younger than 18.

Those statutes also contain a provision that local governments shall not be prohibited from “enacting more stringent ordinances or rules” for tobacco sales, but Leone said the provision does not change the definition of minor in the tobacco regulation statutes and that “more stringent” means rules such as requiring vendors to ask for ID from any customer purchasing tobacco products, regardless of the fact that they appear to be of legal purchasing age.

“That statute does not allow them to change state law,” Leone said.

The proposals will be up for discussion before the Board of Health at 5:30 p.m. Thursday at the Columbia/Boone County Department of Public Health and Human Services, located at 1005 W. Worley St.

The Board of Health took public comment on the proposals at its October meeting, but a spokeswoman for the health department said it has not been determined whether the board will take a final vote on a recommendation at Thursday’s meeting.

If the Board of Health does take a final vote, the bills will likely go before the council next month. But if the board — which typically holds one meeting per month — holds off on the vote until December, the council would likely take votes on the bills in January.

COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

Civil liberties advocate talks about racial disparity in ‘war on marijuana’
Thursday, November 13, 2014 | 11:50 p.m. CST | BY KAROL ILAGAN

COLUMBIA — Replete with statistics and history, civil liberties luminary Ira Glasser's speech dealt with various reasons why the so-called war on marijuana is failing.
Glasser, board president of the Drug Policy Alliance and former executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union, addressed an audience Thursday at MU's Tate Hall as part of a series of activities that marijuana law reform advocates are holding this month.

On Nov. 5, Show-Me Cannabis, a group supporting the legalization of marijuana use and sale in Missouri, filed an initiative petition with the Missouri Secretary of State for the 2016 ballot. The petition's submission took place a day after the midterm polls where voters in Oregon, Alaska and the District of Columbia adopted the measure that legalizes the adult use of cannabis.

Although some states are making headway in drug law reform, Glasser said there are still a large number of people whose lives are being ruined by the way law enforcement agencies are implementing marijuana prohibition laws.

Glasser said law enforcement efforts to crack down on marijuana use and sale have not been effective in any way.

"It hasn’t reduced the crime rate. It hasn’t reduced the availability of marijuana. It hasn’t reduced the number of people who use it," he said.

What it has done, Glasser said, is give an estimated 50,000 black people and Latinos — mostly males ages 18 to 25 — a criminal record every year.

"This criminal record has major consequences that suffocate their opportunities and damage their lives," he said.

According to a 2013 study by the American Civil Liberties Union, marijuana arrests now account for more than half of all drug arrests in the country. Of the 8.2 million marijuana arrests from 2001 to 2010, the ACLU found that 88 percent were for marijuana possession alone. The study also found that a black person is 3.73 times more likely than a white person to be arrested for marijuana possession. This is even true if white people use marijuana just as much, Glasser noted.

In Missouri, black people are 2.6 times more likely than white people to be arrested for having marijuana. Glasser mentioned that the rate is highest in St. Louis City, where black people are 18.4 times more likely to be arrested than white people.

The study also found that Missouri spent $49.12 million to enforce marijuana possession laws in 2010.
Ben Berigan, president of the MU Chapter of the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws, said that looking at racial disparity in drug law enforcement is important because it is not brought to people's attention often because it is a sensitive topic. He said a lot of people have the misconception that racism is a thing of the past, even though it is not.

"I think not a lot of people are thinking about that, that our drug laws in general are geared towards black communities, which they are," he said. He said the situation prevents people from improving their quality of life by preventing them from getting a job because they have a criminal record.

In order to defeat the problem, Glasser said people need to understand the sociological and political purposes that drug prohibition serves. He said it doesn’t serve science, public health, public safety or crime reduction.

Glasser said U.S. history shows how prohibition on drugs has always been racially tinged. He said the government went after opium because the Chinese were supposedly using it, cocaine because black people were said to be using it in the South and marijuana because of its association with Mexicans.

Glasser said there were only about 200,000 prisoners in the entire country in 1968. The number has since risen to 2.4 million in both state and federal prisons. The single biggest reason for that explosion is non-violent drug offenses or petty possession, he said.

COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

Handling abuse during pregnancy is complex problem for health professionals

Thursday, November 13, 2014 | 8:51 p.m. CST

BY KENDALL FOLEY

COLUMBIA — Women of varying professions who came together from around the state Thursday at the Hilton Garden Inn in Columbia had one thing in common: All work with women who are abused during pregnancy or early motherhood.

Nurses and social workers from hospitals, clinics, nonprofits, family planning centers and home visitation programs heard heartbreaking stories, statistics and best practices from Sue Dersch, a coordinator of St. Louis abuse assistance programs.
The women sometimes chimed in, offering personal experience from their own patients. Some silently wiped tears from the corners of their eyes as they heard about expecting mothers tangled in webs of control and abuse.

They came together at the March of Dimes Perinatal Conference at the Hilton Garden Inn. The three-day conference featured topics about all kinds of pregnancy and birth issues, but this session focused on abuse and pregnancy.

Dersch, who runs the Assisting Women with Advocacy Resources and Education program at Barnes-Jewish Hospital, led the session. Dersch is also a former board member of the Missouri Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence.

Defining abuse was Dersch's first step. It's important to know the forms in which it appears in a patient's life, she said. Abuse is not physical more often than not, Dersch said. She defined it as "a pattern of controlling and coercive behaviors used by an adult or teen against an intimate partner."

Dersch added that 1 in 4 adult women and 1 in 5 teens have experienced domestic violence. She also said that about 20 percent of pregnant women have an abusive partner.

Abuse during pregnancy is a common problem in Missouri, said Tina Bloom, an associate professor at MU's Sinclair School of Nursing. Bloom studies domestic violence and, specifically, abuse during pregnancy.

Missouri has the third-highest rate of physical abuse during pregnancy, Bloom said, citing a 2010 study by the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services.

"Pregnancy pressure" is one type of abuse that Dersch identified as being problematic for some pregnant women. In some cases, the mother was tricked or forced into pregnancy. In other situations, fathers will deny their paternity; often, those men are possessive of the child once it's born, Dersch said.

Dersch encouraged open conversation about the complexities of pregnancy and abuse. She addressed the question that is often difficult for bystanders to understand about abusive situations: Why does the victim stay?

"He kills your self-esteem and makes you feel like nobody else wants you," one woman replied.
That was just one item on the long list of complicated circumstances. Sometimes victims have nowhere to go. Often mothers fear for their children's safety. In more cases than not, the victim is stuck in a psychological battle with her abuser and can't convince herself that there's a problem.

A common problem is that leaving often means "trading one set of problems being in the relationship for another set of problems being out of the relationship," Dersch said.

"The focus must be on what's best for the mother and not what we wish she would do," Dersch said. "This is not our life; this is her life."

The women said they came to the session to better understand these unique abuse situations and to gain insight about how to walk precarious lines of safety, comfort, mental health and, of course, happiness with their own patients. Many of them face difficult circumstances: They try desperately to help but sometimes don't quite know how.

Vanessa Davis, who works with teen moms at the St. Louis County Department of Health, thinks that abuse during pregnancy is an increasing problem.

"A lot of the families I work with haven't been exposed to a healthy relationship," Davis said.

"It's a struggle for women who are living these two different lives," Dersch said.

In one life, a woman is excited about her baby and gets to share that happiness with others, Dersch explained. Her other life is hidden, and it's a constant physical, emotional and psychological battle that leaves her miserable and often fearing for her own safety and the safety of her child, she said.

Practices and policies about how to address abuse in a health care setting vary widely, Bloom said in an email.

"In general, we can do a better job at this than we often do," Bloom wrote.

Handling situations of abuse during pregnancy is a delicate situation, Dersch said. It requires a careful balance of persistence and respect for a patient's boundaries. Understanding and compassion are key in taking steps to help a pregnant victim of domestic abuse, she said.

"If we can be the kind of person who can see the complexity, we can be better advocates — we can be better support," Dersch said.
Sen. Claire McCaskill’s opposition to Harry Reid for Senate Democratic leader hints at gubernatorial ambition

BY STEVE KRASKE AND LINDSAY WISE

11/13/2014 9:39 PM

If Claire McCaskill decides to run for Missouri governor in 2016, she made sure Thursday to place some distance between herself and one of her party’s chief lightning rods.

In a move that caught Washington by surprise, the Democratic senator from Missouri opposed Harry Reid for Senate minority leader.

In doing so, she became the first of a small cadre of Democrats who publicly opposed the longtime leader of their party.

McCaskill knew going into the vote that Reid, of Nevada, would go on to win another term. So she knew her action could mean losing out on committee assignments and other perks.

But Reid is the same person mocked relentlessly by Sen. Pat Roberts of Kansas and Republicans nationwide this fall as the man most responsible for Beltway gridlock.

On Thursday morning, McCaskill told reporters she had met with Reid the day before and told him she would not back him again.

“I heard the voters of Missouri loud and clear,” McCaskill said in a statement. “They want change in Washington. Common sense tells me that begins with changes in leadership.”
That McCaskill sought to separate herself from Reid so publicly is one reason many quickly interpreted her move as yet another sign that she is considering a 2016 run for governor or maybe laying the groundwork for another Senate run in 2018.

“For a Democrat in a state that tends to the right, being tied to Harry Reid is not a positive,” said Peverill Squire, a University of Missouri political scientist.

Surrounded by reporters after the vote, McCaskill dismissed the speculation as groundless.

“At this point, I could brush my teeth and it would increase speculation about whether I was running for governor of Missouri,” she said.

McCaskill, first elected to the Senate in 2006, said she was not the only Democrat to air discontent with the status quo before Thursday’s vote by the Democratic caucus.

“There were a lot of voices in there, and it was not a unified voice,” she said. “It was a lot of consternation. ... Reid took it really well and I didn’t feel ostracized.

“People came up to me afterward and said, ‘You said things that needed to be said.’”

A handful of other Democrats from Republican or Republican-leaning states — Joe Manchin of West Virginia, Heidi Heitkamp of North Dakota, Mary Landrieu of Louisiana, Mark Warner and Tim Kaine of Virginia — told reporters they also had opposed Reid after McCaskill made her position public.

“I just thought we needed change,” Manchin said.

McCaskill predicted that Senate Democrats are headed toward introspection and outreach to Republicans, who will command the chamber next year.

In that spirit, McCaskill on Wednesday had lunch with her Missouri colleague, Republican Roy Blunt, who was re-elected Thursday to GOP leadership as vice chairman of the party’s caucus. McCaskill told reporters she will work with Republicans “when
they do things I agree with, and I’m going to fight Republicans when they’re doing things that I think are damaging.”

Blunt declined to talk in detail about what he described as a private conversation. But he said the pair discussed events in Ferguson, Mo. — the site of ongoing turmoil after a white police officer shot an unarmed black man — and legislation that would affect Missouri. The two senators have a history of cooperating on state issues.

Blunt said the votes of red-state and moderate Democrats like McCaskill will be highly sought in the Republican Senate. With a Republican majority of likely 54 Republicans and with 60 votes needed to overcome threats of bill-stalling filibusters, Blunt said winning over six Democrats will be a daily chore for the GOP.

“Red-state Democrats and purple Democrats should look at the last election and figure out how they can best get work done,” Blunt said.

As for McCaskill’s vote against Reid, Blunt said that “apparently neither of us believe that Harry Reid has been doing a good job.”

Even before her vote Thursday, McCaskill has hinted that she is considering the governor’s race. Those hints include nearly $500,000 in donations to Missouri Democrats this year for legislative races. Those close to her say she has long wanted to be the state’s first woman governor. She ran for governor in 2004 and lost to Republican Matt Blunt.

Attorney General Chris Koster, the early front-runner for the 2016 Democratic nomination, has seen his stock downgraded in the wake of a recent New York Times story that said campaign contributions had influenced his decision-making.

Missouri Republicans may nominate a woman, former Missouri House speaker Catherine Hanaway, to be their 2016 gubernatorial nominee. McCaskill might be a better opponent, some Democrats said, than the seemingly wounded Koster.
Steve Glorioso, a longtime Kansas City political consultant close to McCaskill, said the pressure on her to run for governor will increase dramatically if Koster “continues to take on baggage.”

Democrats, he said, won’t be eager to see Missouri become “a completely right-wing state.” Glorioso added that Koster still may prove to be a formidable candidate.

That Hillary Clinton is expected by many to be the Democratic nominee for president in 2016 was not lost on anyone Thursday. Missouri could elect its first female chief executive that year as well.

Read more here: http://www.kansascity.com/news/government-politics/article3925111.html#storylink=cpy

Sinquefield-backed group releases list of public ideas

By Alex Stuckey astuckey@post-dispatch.com 573-556-6186

JEFFERSON CITY • A Rex Sinquefield-backed group today released a list of 55 ideas gathered through its "Create a Great State" listening tour.

Grow Missouri promoted its tour with a 200-foot-long blimp rented through mid-November with part of a $2.5 million donation from Sinquefield. The tour was announced in September as a "separate but complementary" project to an effort by the Missouri House Speaker-in-waiting, John Diehl, who is collecting “100 Great Ideas” for state government.

The stated goal of Diehl’s initiative is to gather taxpayer ideas and bring them to the Capitol for next year’s legislative session.

Since then, the group has held and attended one-on-one and small group discussions across the state. A schedule of events was never released despite repeated requests by the Post-Dispatch and many of the meetings were not open to the public.
Below are a few examples of public ideas provided by the group:

• Lower the corporate income tax so large employers can compete internationally.

• Establish incentives to keep students with degrees in math, science and technology in the state after graduation.

• Promote women business owners.

• Reform the tax credit system.

• Make teachers do more professional development over the summer.

• Make early childhood education a priority.

• Make students take the same tests as naturalized citizens.

• Make literacy a focus of schools at the early childhood level.

• Legalize marijuana and tax it.

• Look at fuel taxes and license fees to fund transportation.

In a statement, group Treasurer Aaron Willard said group members "are confident several (ideas) will resonate with the Missouri Legislature."

A group news release stated Grow Missouri will gather ideas until the end of the year and then beginning sharing them with lawmakers.

Ideas gathered through Diehl's project have not been released. In fact, only one meeting has been publicly announced for the effort.