Missouri Senate panel considers higher ed, Medicaid spending

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. (AP) — A Senate panel on Tuesday began considering changes to the House's version of the state budget, but many of the most contentious issues — including how to deal with soaring Medicaid costs and how much to fund higher education — remain unresolved.

The House's budget passed earlier this month would provide colleges and universities a core funding increase of about $9.4 million. Gov. Jay Nixon has said it would take an increase of about $55.8 million, for administrators to freeze tuition.

**Senate Appropriations Chairman Kurt Schaefer said he wants to ensure tuition stays low across the state. Although public universities' tuition increases are capped at the rate of inflation, he said, some institutions — such as the University of Missouri — could dispute that they are included in that limit.**

The House also cut about $7.6 million from the University of Missouri System's administration as well as $1 million from the Columbia campus.

Schaefer, a Republican from Columbia, said he plans to address the University of Missouri's funding in the next few days. He has also proposed creating a commission to review the university system's policies and administrative structure, which was endorsed Tuesday by a different Senate panel.

Lawmakers have expressed frustration with university leaders following protests in the fall, when students protested what they saw as administrators' indifference to racism on campus. The protests culminated in the resignation of the system president and chancellor of the Columbia campus.

Sen. Mike Parson said the Legislature should be careful about punishing universities through budget cuts, because that could harm students.

Senators have already added more than $7 million for specific programs in the university system.

Schaefer said the growth in Medicaid spending — which the state is legally obligated to pay for — is crowding out other worthwhile items.
"Everyone on this committee has given me projects for their districts, things they want — and that's your prerogative, that's your job, to get things done for your district," he said. "Everyone needs to keep in mind that, if we go along with (the Medicaid spending plan) as-is, there is no money for anything else and to have a balanced budget."

Republican leaders have ruled out raising taxes to pay for Medicaid growth. Schaefer has said he's looking at how the state could negotiate better prices for medicine, which is the biggest factor driving the program's growth.

Sen. Jamilah Nasheed, a Democrat from St. Louis, raised concerns about cutting Medicaid spending without impacting low-income people's health care.

The budget still needs to pass the appropriations committee before heading to the Senate floor. Majority Leader Mike Kehoe said he expects to begin debate on the budget after next week.

Lawmakers will work out any funding differences in a conference committee.

University of Missouri budget in limbo as Senate panel debates state spending

By Rudi Keller

Tuesday, March 29, 2016 at 4:22 pm

JEFFERSON CITY — The University of Missouri will have to wait a few days before learning if it has a chance of recovering money cut from its state appropriation by the Missouri House.

The Senate Appropriations Committee, at the direction of Chairman Kurt Schaefer, R-Columbia, on Tuesday left the UM System allocation open for further discussion. The committee also took no action on $55.8 million in funding increases for all of higher education, recommended by Gov. Jay Nixon and intended to allow colleges and universities to forego a tuition increase for the coming school year.

“We will have to make a determination of what that number will be,” Schaefer told the committee. Nixon “did have the agreement on no tuition increase … I am not saying that dictates what we do, but that is part of the equation on this.”
Nixon announced his plans for a 6 percent increase in state aid to higher education in September, before turmoil at MU drew international attention and resulted in the resignations of UM System President Tim Wolfe and Columbia campus Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin. Student protests, a boycott of athletic activities by the Tiger football team, political uproar over the actions of Assistant Professor Melissa Click and disputes over faculty teaching waivers, Planned Parenthood and graduate assistant health insurance have all contributed to the university’s poor image among lawmakers.

The appropriations committee this week is having its first public discussions of particular amounts for each line of the $27.1 billion spending plan for the year beginning July 1. The committee agreed to make no changes in the House appropriation of $70.3 million in new spending on public schools.

Schaefer targeted spending in the Department of Social Services by making it the first appropriation bill up for review. He said new general revenue allocated to the department for the coming year is $395 million, more than the $366 million expected to come in from a growing economy.

“Everyone needs to keep in mind that if we go along with House Bill 11 as is, there is no money for anything else,” Schaefer said, referring to the social services appropriation bill. “We need a big picture of everything before we do that.”

The budget sent to the Senate by the House cuts the university by $8.6 million from this year’s funding level of $434.6 million. It also splits the budget into seven line items, taking $7.6 million from system administration and $1 million from the Columbia campus budget.

Schaefer said he intends to break up the UM System appropriation as well, even if he is unsure if he will follow suit on cuts.

Under Nixon’s plan, the UM System was allocated a $26.8 million increase from the $55.8 million pool for increases to public colleges and universities based on performance. The House budget cuts the pool to $9.4 million, makes it contingent on meeting revenue growth targets and denies a share to UM.

Some members of the committee seemed reluctant to cut the university.

“I want to make sure at the end of the day that some kid or some parent isn’t being punished,” said Sen. Mike Parson, R-Bolivar.

The Columbia campus is expecting a steep drop in enrollment in the coming year, costing about $32 million in tuition revenue. Campus divisions have been told to plan for a 5 percent budget cut and to implement a hiring freeze.

The committee did add several items to the higher education budget. One of the largest percentage increases was granted to the State Historical Society of Missouri, which will see a budget increase of $1 million, or 45.2 percent, if Schaefer’s spending proposal stands.
Nixon and the House had both allocated a $250,000 increase for the historical society, which is building a new research center and museum in Columbia.

The committee added $1 million for Missouri University of Science and Technology to create an engineering education program in Clay County and $400,000 to fund a Project Lead the Way program at S&T for training teachers in science, technology, engineering and math.

UMKC would receive $2 million and a hospital on the western side of the state would get $3 million to expand medical student training.

The Senate committee also agreed to $1.5 million, already included in the House budget plan, to fund eight University Extension for Community Healthcare Outcomes programs.

Schaefer said a final budget plan would come up for a committee vote late this week or early next week.

MU still deserves support

Piling on hurts all of Missouri.

By CALEB ROWDEN

Tuesday, March 29, 2016 at 2:00 pm

If you’re a Mid-Missourian reading this op-ed, there’s a pretty good chance you have been frustrated, disappointed or downright angry at something that has happened at the University of Missouri during the past few months.

But MU is still a world-class higher education institution.

We have watched as a perfect storm of missteps shook the university to its core. It was difficult to watch nearly every national news outlet descend upon our community to cover an event that will change the trajectory of our great university. In situations like these, we often resort to playing the blame game in an effort to sidestep the hard but necessary work of determining how we got where we are and, more important, what we can do to ensure we never return here again.

The university must be accountable to taxpayers, students and parents. And we in return must be unwavering in our support of our university. Mid-Missourians are resilient. They’re smart, passionate and care deeply for their community. While at times our disagreements are
significant, our common passion for our community deems those disagreements secondary. That resilience is vital to our future and to the university’s future.

Clearly, despite everything that has happened, investing in MU is still one of the best choices we can make in Jefferson City. Investing in the university doesn’t mean we pretend nothing is wrong. That doesn’t mean we aren’t honest about the significant challenges before us. But I am convinced the only way we can move forward is to be unified around a common cause: ensuring MU’s continued place as a pre-eminent, world-class education and research institution.

Recently, some in the Missouri House chose to sustain more than $7.5 million in cuts to the UM System and withhold a 2 percent performance funding increase for each of the four campuses. That is on top of the $35 million in institutional cuts made necessary by a significant decrease in enrollment. Piling on MU at this critical moment is not just detrimental to this community but to the state as a whole. Those who are angry should take care to aim their anger in the right direction. Reactionary budget cuts like the ones in the House hurt students, period. Some in Jefferson City are attempting to make their point on the backs of student tuition and the employment of thousands of middle-class staff who work hard every day to make the university a great place to get an education. The anger might be warranted, but punishing students and staff is not.

We can move Mid-Missouri forward. But we have to do it together. Our future must be informed by our past, but it doesn’t have to be defined by it. Our future is what we make of it. And the future for the University of Missouri and for our great community is bright.

Caleb Rowden, R-Columbia, represents District 44 in the Missouri House of Representatives.

Chadwick drops commission bid over University of Missouri employment rules

By Rudi Keller

Tuesday, March 29, 2016 at 12:11 pm

Graduate assistants at the University of Missouri are considered employees when they want to run for office but not when they want to unionize, former First Ward Councilwoman Ginny Chadwick learned Monday.
Chadwick, who was considering a bid for Boone County Southern District commissioner, said she will not file because the university will not grant her leave during the transition period between two policies covering political activity by people on the UM payroll.

Chadwick, a Democrat, would have joined a crowded field that already includes five Democrats and three Republicans vying to replace Democrat Karen Miller, who is stepping down after more than 20 years in office.

If she became a candidate, Chadwick said she was told she would have to quit or take leave through August from her position teaching courses in the MU School of Health Professions.

“It was never my intention to have to walk out of the classroom in the middle of the semester,” Chadwick said.

Through Thursday, the university is operating under a policy requiring all university staff to have approved leave or resign before filing as a candidate for a full-time partisan office. Josh Hawley, an associate professor in MU’s School of Law, is on leave through August to compete in the Republican primary for attorney general.

A new policy takes effect Friday that is designed to recognize that modern campaigns begin before a candidate files. Under the policy, the leave must be granted or the resignation must happen before a committee is organized to raise money for the race or the candidate files, whichever comes first.

The new policy makes another significant change — a previous reference to university staff is replaced by the term “employees.” The phrase university staff encompasses all “nonregular academic staff appointments,” Paul Maguffee of the UM General Counsel’s office wrote in an email Monday to Chadwick.

Chadwick had requested leave from Tuesday until Friday.

“I don’t believe the change in wording ... was intended to narrow the scope of the rule,” Maguffee wrote. “I don’t think we’d be safe to assume that a graduate instructor falls outside the rule after April 1.”

The employment status of graduate assistants has been raised during collective bargaining discussions, Maguffee wrote, “but I don’t think the discussions in that context determine whether” the political activity rule “applies to graduate instructors.”

The university did not respond to messages seeking comment on Maguffee’s email. Connor Lewis, co-chairman MU’s Coalition of Graduate Workers, said it shows the university has a flexible definition of employee.

“It is another example of the university burdening graduate employees with all of the rules of being employees,” Lewis said. “But when we want constitutional rights, they say they don’t think we are employees, which is an astonishing level of doublespeak.”
Filing was set to close at 5 p.m. Tuesday for state, county and party committee offices. At the Secretary of State’s Office in Jefferson City, no new candidates for Boone County legislative races or a contest for circuit judge had filed by 11 a.m.

At the Boone County Clerk’s Office, where candidates file for county and party committee seats, Brenndan Riddles of Columbia filed paperwork Monday for the Republican nomination in the Northern District commission race. He will run against Paul Prevo of Hallsville to challenge incumbent Janet Thompson in November. Riddles did not respond to messages seeking comment.

One Democrat, two Republicans and two Libertarians filed for committee seats on Monday.

Chadwick was a member of the Columbia City Council for less than a year before resigning in January 2015 amid a recall effort. She said she did not intend to become a test case for the status of graduate assistants when she considered a county commission bid.

The Coalition of Graduate Workers is preparing to take the university to court to settle whether they have the right to unionize. The timing on that action is uncertain, but Lewis said the decision about Chadwick’s employment status will play a crucial role.

“It is a pretty big example of the university saying we have all the responsibilities of employees but none of the rights,” Lewis said.

**MISSOURIAN**

**Chadwick won't run for County Commission seat**

WILLIAM SCHMITT, 16 hrs ago

COLUMBIA — **Ginny Chadwick will not run for a seat on the Boone County Commission because the University of Missouri System's rules on employee conduct and political activity mean she would have had to resign or take a leave of absence from her MU teaching position during her candidacy.**

Chadwick, a graduate instructor in the Department of Health Sciences and a doctoral student of public affairs, teaches two sections of Healthcare Organization and Leadership at MU. According to the UM System's Collected Rules and Regulations and a UM System attorney, her status as a graduate student teacher means that her intention to run as a Democrat for the
Southern District Commission required her to step down, at least temporarily, because she is a university employee. MU staff who seek full-time office have to make their political intentions known to their supervisor and eventually to the UM System president.

"The holding of any elective full-time office in local, county, state or the Federal government is forbidden while the person is serving on the University staff," according to university rules. "Before accepting such an office, a person is required to resign his University post. A person seeking election to such an office must resign or request a leave of absence as of the date of filing in the primary."

The office of County Commissioner is a full-time job with a salary of about $95,000. The rule didn't apply when Chadwick represented the city's First Ward on the Columbia City Council, a part-time position that offered a $6,000 annual stipend.

Chadwick said she telephoned UM System Deputy General Counsel Paul Maguffee after receiving a call from Diane Booth of the Boone County Muleskinners, who told her she would have to resign if she were to run. She emailed Rosemary Hogan, who chairs the Department of Health Sciences, and made her aware of both calls on March 25.

Maguffee replied to Chadwick on Monday, citing the above section of the Collected Rules and Regulations and telling Chadwick that "staff" included those with nonregular academic staff positions such as hers.

"Based on this, I believe your position of graduate instructor would fall within the University’s academic staff and would be subject to Section 330.050.A.2.b," Maguffee wrote. "Boone County Commissioner is a full-time office. Accordingly, I believe it would be necessary for you to resign or request a leave of absence as of the date you file in the primary."

Chadwick said she was unaware of the rule when she said she would run last week. She doesn't teach summer classes, and she hadn't planned to go on leave unless she won the primary nomination. She denied that her candidacy was an attempt to force the university to acknowledge that graduate student workers like herself are university employees.
"I did not consider County Commissioner with the sole purpose of getting the university to classify us as employees under regulation 330," Chadwick said. "... I could not have predicted this exact path. Nobody could have. Once I realized that the opportunity was opening, of course I was going to run down it."

That section of the bylaws is scheduled to change Friday per a vote by the Board of Curators on July 24, the day after MU law professor Josh Hawley began his run for state attorney general. The changes include replacing "he" with "he or she" and changing "staff" to "employee."

Chadwick asked for and received clarification from Maguffee that she, as a graduate instructor, was considered an "employee" by the university. Maguffee told her he didn't believe the new wording was meant to limit how the rule was applied and said he thought the rule would still cover graduate instructors after Friday.

"I'm aware that the employment status of graduate assistants has come up in discussions related to collective bargaining, but I don't think the discussions in that context determine whether Section 330.050 applies to graduate instructors," he wrote.

A movement for graduate student rights began at MU after graduate and professional students were told in August that the university would no longer pay their health insurance subsidies due to an IRS interpretation of the Affordable Care Act. The decision was reversed a week later, and former MU Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin guaranteed in October that subsidies would continue. Interim Chancellor Hank Foley said in January that the subsidies would continue until June 30, 2017.

Meanwhile, graduate students started the Forum on Graduate Rights, which gathered signature to hold an election on whether to create a union of graduate student workers. The Coalition of Graduate Workers, an arm of the Forum on Graduate Rights, has affiliated itself with the Missouri National Education Association and the National Education Association, and the groups met several times with university leaders through February.
On Feb. 10, interim UM System President Mike Middleton said the university needed clarity on whether graduate students could legally organize "as there is no legal precedent or clarity in current Missouri law to make that determination."

The Coalition of Graduate Workers plans to hold an election April 18 and 19 to decide if the coalition will be the sole collective bargaining representative for graduate student workers, said Joseph Moore, a doctoral student of journalism and a member of the coalition's organizing committee.

"However, the university has chosen not to recognize the union, regardless of the outcome of the vote, on the grounds that we are not employees," Moore said in an email. "The Missouri Constitution guarantees the right of employees to collective bargaining, so if they refuse to acknowledge we're employees they can deny us our constitutional rights."

Chadwick has been a supporter of the movement, going so far as to hold a banner during an Aug. 26 walkout and rally. She's a member of both the Coalition of Graduate Workers and the Forum on Graduate Rights, and she has already submitted an application to become a union member.

"I was under the impression I was an employee until I heard I couldn't unionize," she said. "... It's definitely disappointing that I can't file for candidacy, but I think some really positive things have come out of this for the graduate students. We have been working for quite a while now to organize and call a union election, and the university has made it clear that they are going to put whatever roadblocks in place and create a legal challenge for us."

Candidates could file for office until 5 p.m. Tuesday.