COLUMBIA — A new report showed Mizzou is making progress against discrimination and sexual assault.

That followed a national survey that highlights some areas of concerns.

MU officials said women between the ages of 18 and 24 have the highest risk of experiencing sexual harassment and sexual violence. Two years ago, a survey of 27 colleges and universities by the Association of American Universities found that more than half of college students said sexual assault was a problem on their campus. MU officials said fewer Mizzou students felt that way two years later.

“I think we’ve done a couple things to really move the needle in terms of sexual violence on our campus,” MU Assistant Vice Chancellor Ellen Eardley said. "First, I think folks are more aware.”

Two MU seniors said they saw fewer cases of sexual violence.

“I personally haven’t experienced anything since I got older,” student Lauren Butowski said. "I also wonder that if it’s the younger people that’s little more prevalent.”

“I definitely think they have gone down a lot," said Jodi Ganapathy, another MU student. "I know recently they started the “It’s On Us” campaign which has brought a lot of light to that.”

A new MU internal report shows MU officials received 674 complaints of discrimination during the 2015-2016 school year. That included sexual harassment and assault. 53 people requested
full investigations. 20 people were held responsible for various violations. MU officials created a Task Force on Sexual Violence to review campus resources and make any necessary changes. MU officials said keeping these resources is important as University Leaders face a tight budget.

An independent organization called College.Stats.Org recently ranked Mizzou as one of the top ten safest campuses in the country.

MU report on sexual assault encourages continuation of Green Dot

SARAH WYNN, 12 hrs ago

COLUMBIA — The first task force report from the MU Office of Civil Rights and Title IX recommends continuing campus sexual assault and harassment education initiatives, especially the bystander intervention program Green Dot.

The University of Missouri Sexual and Intimate Partner Violence Task Force Report was one of two reports released Thursday. The other was the 2015-2016 annual report from the Title IX office, which included sexual assault and harassment numbers from 2015-2016. According to the annual report, there were:

- 423 allegations of sex/gender discrimination in which the respondent was a student, up from 342 in 2014-2015.
- 68 cases of sexual harassment, down from 85 in 2014-2015.
- 75 cases of nonconsensual sexual intercourse, up from 62 in 2014-2015.
- 42 allegations of stalking on the basis of sex, up from 31 in 2014-2015.

Ellen Eardley, assistant vice provost for civil rights and Title IX at MU, said she thinks the numbers have increased because of more reporting.
“We don’t necessarily think that the prevalence has gone up,” said Eardley, “Those numbers reflect increased reporting to our office, which means increased trust in the work that we’re doing, increased awareness about the services that we offer.”

The task force report focused on three areas: education, prevention and response.

The report noted the Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Center and the Interfraternity Council’s partnership to educate and engage fraternity men to confront myths on masculinity and define sexual violence. The RSVP Center meets regularly with council leaders to talk about what sexual violence means and how they can be peer educators in their fraternities.

“We really want to be focusing our attention on this because peer education is so important, for peers to hear from their other peers that certain behavior is not acceptable in their fraternity,” Eardley said. "It’s not acceptable in their classrooms or on their campus.”

Salama Gallimore, director of investigations and deputy Title IX coordinator, said peer educators open a space for their classmates and friends to understand consent and boundaries without outside people coming in to educate.

New students are also required to pass the online Not Anymore training; if they don’t, they can’t enroll in their next semester.

One of the key programs for the Civil Rights and Title IX Office and RSVP is Green Dot, which is based in the RSVP Center. When anyone on campus sees an act of power-based violence, the person can step in to intervene or, if they feel uncomfortable doing so, get another person involved. Part of a national program, Green Dot is funded at MU through state and federal grants.

Getting the grant money, Eardley said, "shows confidence in our program, and I’m hopeful that we’ll be able to maintain (Green Dot), either through grant funding or funding from our general revenue budget.”

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has recognized Green Dot as a promising program, according to the report. The task force wants to see funding maintained for the MU Green Dot program.
Two years ago, MU participated for the first time in a climate survey on sexual assault and sexual misconduct at higher education institutions. The data helps universities and colleges see where they stand nationally. The next one will be done in 2019, and Eardley said she wants to see measurable differences at MU by then.

“We want to see where we’re at when we have a four-year time period to engage the campus,” she said.
Report: MU should increase funding for programs aimed at sexual violence victims

By Rudi Keller
Columbia Daily Tribune

The University of Missouri should protect the budget for the Office of Civil Rights and Title IX, and increase funding for the most successful on-campus program helping victims of sexual violence, a task force report released Thursday recommends.

The Sexual and Intimate Partner Task Force, a 21-member group, was created in fall 2015 to review a survey conducted at MU and 26 other universities by the American Association of Universities. The group was directed to review university programs and responses to relationship violence and recommend how to maintain or improve those programs.

"The fact that this task force was convened by the provost, who is now interim chancellor, shows a commitment from the highest level of administration," said Ellen Eardley, director of the Office of Civil Rights and Title IX and a task force member, referring to Garnett Stokes who was named interim chancellor earlier this week.

More online
Read the full report from the task force, as well as the 2015-2016 annual report from the Office for Civil Rights & Title IX, at columbiatribune.com.

most often go to the Student Health Center or the Counseling Center on campus, according to the task force report, but in some cases reported the services as unhelpful. The Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Center was rated as the most helpful, useful and respectful on campus.

"In fact, no student respondents who access the RSVP Center described their services negatively," the report states.

However, only 54.6 percent of students were aware of the center and it is staffed by a single advocate, Bloom said. The report recommends more money for the center and efforts to make its Green Dot prevention program, which provides bystander intervention training, more visible.

"That is where we really need to make sure that students under-
The 2015 survey found women are far more likely to be sexually assaulted than men on campus, with 27.2 percent of female undergraduates and 12.5 percent female graduate students saying they had been sexually assaulted since entering college, compared to 5.9 percent of male undergraduates and 3.1 percent for male graduate students.

The survey also found that almost 80 percent of women and more than 95 percent of men who suffered from the most serious assaults, which would be classified as rape under state law, did not report to campus officials. The survey did not ask whether victims reported the assaults to law enforcement.

After suffering sexual assault, students said it impaired their ability to continue their education because of injuries, fear for their future safety and feelings of helplessness and hopelessness.

"It is a challenging subject and what the university has to do, like every university does, is we have to balance when a survivor or a victim of violence reports their experience, we want to give them all the tools and resources they need to continue their education, to heal, to move beyond what has happened to them," said Tina Bloom, a task force member and associate professor of nursing.

The task force made recommendations in three general categories — educating the campus about relationship violence, prevention and responding to victims. The survey and report show many students are uncertain where to get the best help.

When students need help dealing with sexual assault, discrimination or harassment, they need to know that there is a path forward that is better for them, that they understand it is there and what it does and get other services to collaborate," Bloom said.

Eardley's office was created in 2014 and has grown from an administrator, assistant and one investigator to five full-time consultants and investigators, a case manager and a full-time outreach program.

"I would say the institution has invested in this work in a very meaningful way," Eardley said.

Her office issued its annual report Thursday covering the 2015-16 school year. The office investigated 674 incidents ranging from racial discrimination to sexual assault and gender bias. In the incidents, the office identified 924 potential violations of law or university policy.

Sex and gender cases generated 549 potential violations and racial discrimination was the second largest category, with 176 potential violations. The accused included 72 faculty members, 131 staff members and 221 students. Students made the most complaints about faculty and other students, while staff made the largest number of complaints about staff employee violations.

Most reports did not result in a formal investigation or action. Of the 53 full investigations, 20 individuals were found responsible for violating various policies, and three matters were resolved via formal conflict resolution.

"Several individuals were permanently removed from our campus or voluntarily left," the report states.

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MU sexual and intimate partner violence task force releases recommendations


By Deborah Kendrick

COLUMBIA, Mo. - A new report finds that the rate of sexual assaults on the University of Missouri campus is "too high for its population size."

Vice Chancellor Garnett Stokes, now interim chancellor, established the University of Missouri's Sexual and Intimate Partner Violence Task Force in the fall of 2015.

**Sexual and Intimate Partner Violence Task Force Report**

The task force was in charge of reviewing the results of a 2015 Association of American Universities campus climate survey on sexual assault and misconduct.

The report found that 52 percent of students had experienced sexual harassment, a substantial percentage of graduate students reported sexual harassment by an MU faculty member and fewer than half knew where to find help at MU.

The task force identified three primary areas for focus: education, prevention and response, noting the rate of sexual assault and misconduct was too high for all populations at MU and particularly high for undergraduate women and higher than the average of all institutions that participated in the AAU study.

The Office for Civil Rights & Title IX told ABC 17 News the university is fully invested in educating the campus on prevention.

**2015-2016 Office for Civil Rights and Title IX Annual Report**

The 2015-2016 annual report described 674 alleged incidents of race, color, sex, disability, religion or age discrimination.
Among the 674 reports, 549 were sex/gender discrimination reports, 176 were race/discrimination reports and 23 were religious discrimination.

In comparison, the 2014 to 2015 annual report found that 342 sex/gender discrimination incidents were reported involved students.

The report covers the fall of 2015, when students protested and spoke out publicly against race and discrimination and hate-motivated incidents on campus.

"We hope that this report will provide you with a sense of the campus climate and demonstrate our efforts to identify, stop, and prevent discrimination and sexual violence. Let there be no doubt- our team and other stakeholders in the MU community are working tirelessly to stop discrimination on campus," said Ellen Eardley, assistant vice chancellor for civil rights and Title IX.

While there have been an increase in reports, the University said it's because more students are reporting these type of incidents.

"Reporting has gone up, we don't think it means necessarily the prevalence rate has gone up," Eardley said. "Those numbers reflect increase reporting to our office, increase in awareness about services that we offer."

The University said they will participate in another AAU survey in 2019 to see what progress they made.

MU Office Releases Discrimination and Sexual Violence Report

By Rosemary Belson

University of Missouri Office for Civil Rights and Title IX published its first joint annual report Thursday identifying and addressing instances of discrimination and sexual violence on campus.
MU combined the Civil Rights and Title IX office in December 2015 following student protests over lack of response to racist incidents. The union of these offices streamlines reports and investigations of discrimination complaints at the university.

From Fall 2015 to Spring 2016 the office received 674 alleged incidences of discrimination.

Salama Gallimore is the Director of Investigations and Deputy Title IX Coordinator. She says the office is focused on creating trust, and providing support and education.

“We have the opportunity to do one on one education with folks and talk about why situations may have occurred, the impact that those situations may have had on other people..” Gallimore says.

The office also published the MU Sexual and Intimate Partner Violence Task Force 2017 report today.

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**Test for ALS could detect similar disease in dogs**

Generated from News Bureau press release: Biomarker Test for Lou Gehrig’s Disease Useful in Diagnosing Canine Neurodegenerative Disease

Posted by Jeff Sossamon-U. Missouri May 4th, 2017

A biomarker test that helps diagnose ALS can also help diagnose degenerative myelopathy in dogs, report researchers.

In 2009, researchers discovered a genetic link between amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), or Lou Gehrig’s disease, in people and degenerative myelopathy (DM) in dogs.

The neurodegenerative disease, an older adult onset disease than can eventually lead to paralysis, has been confirmed in more than 30 purebred dog breeds, including Pembroke Welsh corgis, German shepherds, and boxers, as well as mixed breed dogs. The current genetic test for DM can be useful to breeders and veterinarians in identifying risk for the disease; however, it has limitations when diagnosing DM.
“DM is a diagnosis of exclusion, meaning that veterinarians must rule out all other diseases that mimic it before coming to a final diagnosis,” says Joan Coates, a professor of veterinary medicine and surgery at the University of Missouri.

“This requires expensive diagnostic procedures such as MRIs of the spinal cord. Now that we know that DM and ALS are related, we are studying ways to diagnose and measure disease progression with similar diagnostic modalities used in ALS patients.”

ALS can be tested using phosphorylated neurofilament heavy proteins (pNF-H) that are released into spinal fluid and blood in people with the disease. These biomarkers are released during the degeneration of spinal tissues making them a good indicator that ALS is present.

Cerebrospinal fluid and blood samples were collected from DM-affected dogs, including dogs that had a confirmed diagnosis as well as dogs in early stages of the disease. pNF-H concentrations from those samples were compared to samples from age-matched normal dogs and dogs with mimicking diseases.

“We found a significant difference in the DM affected dogs,” Coates says. “pNF-H levels were increased in the cerebrospinal fluid of the DM-affected dogs relative to the control groups, indicating that the human ALS test could be used to diagnose DM. These results will enable us to ‘scale up’ the test to make it more accessible to veterinary community.”

Collecting cerebrospinal fluid from patients is more complicated than a blood test, but is less expensive compared to an MRI to make a presumptive DM diagnosis, Coates says. Nonetheless, pNF-H may serve as a diagnostic tool for diagnosis of DM.

Coates is also conducting clinical trial research for treatment of DM. The goals of the therapies being tested is to slow the progression of neurologic signs of DM and improve quality of life for dogs.

Christine Toedebusch, a veterinary neurology resident and doctoral candidate, is lead author of the study in *Journal of Veterinary Internal Medicine*.

The therapies are in collaborations with other ALS researchers and funded by the ALS Association and National Institutes of Health.

Coates is seeking clinical trial participants to evaluate a treatment for canine DM. For more information, email her at coatesj@missouri.edu. The American Boxer Charitable Foundation and the American Kennel Club Canine Health Foundation funded the work.
Opportunity Cost: Mizzou Cuts


By Alyssa Toomey

While the budget for the upcoming fiscal year is not yet finalized, there is at least one certainty: Funding for higher education will be cut -- it's just a matter of how much.

Missouri lawmakers have approved a spending plan that cuts core funding for public colleges and universities by more than six percent.

UM System President Mun Choi has said he expects about $30 million in state funding to be cut from the UM System's core budget.

Declining state support is a trend that's not unique to Missouri. In fact, it's happening all across the nation.

"Lower levels of state support that lead to higher tuition is a phenomena we're seeing all across the United States," UM System President Mun Choi told ABC 17 News.

Meanwhile, students are feeling the effect of the state's declining support as the burden of paying for higher education shifts from the state to the student.

"It's terrifying. I mean, my dad is still paying off his student loans from law school, and the price has only gone up," Sam Willoh, a junior who's studying political science at the University of Missouri, told ABC 17 News. "Grad school would be very expensive and it would affect me long term."

Since the recession in 2008, state spending per student has decreased in almost all 50 states.

There are a handful of states that have been hit with larger cuts, but state support for higher education has been on the decline in Missouri since the early 2000s.

"Over the past 10 years, we've seen an increased amount of burden shift from the state to students and parents. So, what we see is a lot of students coming in with limited funds and they need to depend on federal student loans, or they need to depend on parent loans to really make
the cost up that the state has really cut back," Nick Prewett, director of financial aid at the University of Missouri said.

The UM System says Missouri ranks 46th in per capital funding for higher education. In our neighboring states, per capita state spending is significantly higher.

"What we've seen is the average amount of student loan debt grow," Prewett said. "This year, our average student loan is about $23,000."

Chairman of the House Budget Committee Rep. Scott Fitzpatrick said Medicaid is higher education's biggest competitor in terms of the budget.

"Entitlement spending is growing faster than state revenues," Fitzpatrick said. "We were on a collision course [with Medicaid] and we finally had a collision that required us to make hard choices. We've tried to make higher education a priority, but when it comes down to having to make a decision between paying our Medicaid bills or spending on discretionary things like higher education, we have to pay our bills."

Some say another contributing factor to the declining state support is the 2015 protests at Mizzou.

"A lot of the funding cuts, politically, was reactionary to some of the events that happened on the university. And I think Mizzou still gets a lot of bad press for that," Willloh said.

Asked point-blank if there's still resentment in the legislature over the unrest on campus that made national news, Fitpatrick replied, "Yes, I think there is... I would like for us to get through a couple months without there being a story about something stupid the university did. That would help."

As for Choi's response to Fitzpatrick's remarks? "I’ve heard that as well. Not only from the legislators, but also from the public," he said. "My response has been that I understand why they may feel that there is still some resentment for the university. But, if the resentment is shared by cutting our budget, I’d like to ask you to reflect on the impact to our students who we are educating in this state. Because with cuts, there’s going to be less faculty members, less classes, less opportunities for our students to succeed."

One way for the UM System to generate more revenue is by raising tuition. A 2.1 percent increase for instate students has been proposed.

For MU students, the proposal means the per-credit hour rate would increase by $5.80. Interim Vice President for Finance Ryan Rapp has said the proposed tuition hike would bring in about $14.4 million in additional revenue. It's also within the limitations set by Senate Bill 389.

Compared to other states, Missouri has kept tuition incredibly low. Over a six-year time period, tuition at public four-year colleges has only increased by about 7 percent. Compare that to Arizona, where tuition is up by 83 percent.
"One of the challenges that we have as an institution is that we control tuition. We don’t necessarily control the expenses; grocery expenses, apartment expenses, transportation expenses, all those factor into the cost of attending an institution," Prewett said. "So while you’ve seen our tuition gradually increase, we’ve seen other expenses in this region of the state also increase substantially. So we’ve seen the total cost of attending college go up."

So, who should pay for higher education? That all comes down to who you ask.

"The state support for higher education institutions is optional, quite frankly," Fitzpatrick said.

"I think if we're cutting discretionary funding and we limit the amount that we're putting into higher educational, I think that it has somewhat of a domino effect in the future with our less skilled less able workforce," Prewett countered.

While the state works to balance its budget, students and parents are feeling the effect.

"Unless something drastically changes soon, we're going to only see this get worse, because parents who have dept now aren't paying for their kids' school," Willoh said.

Fitzpatrick, meanwhile, suggested that Missouri lawmakers look at a different way to fund higher education.

"Maybe we need to look at a better way to fund higher education and maybe the best way to do that is to empower the students through scholarships to make the decisions," he said, "And maybe that’s something we should look at."

For more on how President Choi plans to move the system forward, take a look at some of our past coverage.

For St. Louis charter schools, success is in the eye of the beholder

By Camille Phillips

Gateway Science Academy wants families to be satisfied. City Garden Montessori is aiming for racial equity. Neither are unique goals for charter schools in St. Louis.
Most of the city’s 17 public charter school systems have their own definition of success, including academic growth, family involvement and personal development. But they’re also required by Missouri law to take the state’s academic standards into account. And without a definitive way to measure success, parents have to trust that the school’s are doing right by their children.

To illustrate the situation, this story looks at two schools, one with an excellent track record with the state for attendance, standardized test scores and graduation rates and the other with a history of low performance.

Not great on state, but does it matter?

Confluence Academy, the largest charter school system in St. Louis, is a success — at least to CEO Candice Carter-Oliver. That’s despite falling short of state benchmarks ever since it opened in 2003.

“The 3200 families that are with us, that have chosen us, are with us for a reason. Otherwise they would not have stayed. And so because of that we are doing some things very well and right,” she said.

At the same time, she acknowledged that the school system needs to improve, and gives the state standards considerable weight.

Confluence has performed worse, judging by state standards, than St. Louis Public Schools for three straight years. State law says charter schools can face consequences for that; it’s the sponsor’s job — not the state board of education’s — to close a charter school if it’s not measuring up.

But Confluence’s sponsor, the University of Missouri-Columbia, renewed its charter earlier this year. That’s because Confluence improved on state standards by 20 percentage points over the past three years, according to Gerry Kettenbach, the director of Mizzou’s charter school office.

“If Confluence had totally been flat line, we would not have renewed them. After two and a half years we would have said you know, you’ve made no gain. They were in that middle category. They’ve not been doing well but they’re improving,” Kettenbach said.

Kettenbach also interprets Missouri’s law to mean that charters have to do better than specific schools in the same district, not the district overall.

“I know that’s a debatable position, but if our goal truly is to give parents a choice of where their kids go to school, than to remove an option that is performing better than some of its surrounding schools, to me, doesn’t make sense,” he said.

Good scores, good citizens?

Even charter schools that have an excellent track with the state also use other yardsticks to measure their success. Northside Community School in northwest St. Louis prizes personal development. Like Confluence, Northside has mostly black or Latino students from low-income households.

Principal Stella Erondu has high expectations for her 400 elementary-school students. It’s paid off: Northside earned a perfect score from the state last year.

But high scores on standardized tests aren’t Erondu’s goal.
“Of course academically I want them to be successful, but I also want them to have social skills,” said Erondu. “A lot of grown-ups who have technical skills have derailed because they didn’t have the soft skills to manage their temper, their anger, manage their workplace.”

To emphasize those soft skills, Northside measures increases in a student’s self-control, independence and organization — things Erondu considers at least as important as math and English.

Meanwhile, the rules governing Missouri’s charter schools are still being fine-tuned, even 20 years into their existence.

“The expectations of success that were in place then, you know, over the test of time have been found maybe weren’t as clear as we wanted them to be, and so they’ve evolved over time,” Kettenbach said.

Thanks to Trump and GOP, shaky Senate Democrats get an election break

WASHINGTON — Vulnerable Senate Democrats got a political gift Thursday – a chance to vote for a budget crafted by both parties and endorsed by President Donald Trump, a budget they can tout to their bases and the crucial centrist voters who control their political fates.

It’s a spending plan that allowed Sen. Claire McCaskill, D-Mo., facing re-election in a state Trump won by 19 points last year, to abandon her long-standing aversion to massive government spending bills and support this one. Democrats in other states Trump carried also voted for the bill.

“This was a bipartisan compromise,” McCaskill explained. “This is how it’s supposed to work. We’re supposed to come together and find places of agreement.”

Republicans now control 52 of the Senate’s 100 seats. Democrats have to defend 23 seats next year and Republicans only nine. The challenge for Democrats: Ten incumbents are running in states Trump won last year.

Seven are viewed as too close to call by the website Inside Elections in a nonpartisan analysis: McCaskill and Sen. Joe Donnelly of Indiana, Heidi Heitkamp of North Dakota, Joe Manchin of West Virginia, Bill Nelson of Florida, Jon Tester of Montana and Tammy Baldwin of Wisconsin. Also on the shaky list could be Sens. Sherrod Brown of Ohio and Bob Casey of Pennsylvania.
Sen. Debbie Stabenow of Michigan is seen as safe. They all voted for the budget Thursday. The Senate passed the bill 79-18.

McCaskill would have opened herself to “the ultimate obstruction charge” by a Republican opponent in 2018 if she’d voted against the budget bill to make a political point — and thus against items important to Missouri, said Jennifer Duffy, a senior editor for the nonpartisan Cook Political Report, where she analyzes U.S. Senate and governors’ races.

“She gets to have it both ways. When she was voting against Obama, she was breaking with her party, being independent,” Duffy said. “Now she gets to break with her party, be independent and do what’s right for the state.”

It’s a turnaround for McCaskill. She had voted against six of these big budget packages since being elected to Congress in 2006. Only once, in January 2014, when the federal government was coming out of a shutdown, did the former Missouri state auditor overcome her distaste for this type of legislation, often packed with special-interest giveaways, to vote yes.

McCaskill’s choice makes practical and political sense, said Marvin Overby, a University of Missouri political science professor.

The senator faces the tricky task of figuring out how to stand up to Trump, as her liberal base demands, without alienating voters in her state who are sympathetic to him.

McCaskill wants to portray herself for re-election purposes as a centrist who is willing to work with Trump but also can serve as a moderating influence on his administration, Overby said. Casting a no vote that could shut down the government in the president’s first few months in office would run counter to that goal, he said.

“She’s trying to find places where she can work with him and not appear obstructionist,” he added. “I think that’s part of how she’s going to sell herself for the 2018 race.”

Her vote also offers a sharp contrast to potential challenger Rep. Ann Wagner, R-Mo. Wagner, who is said to be weighing a Senate bid, voted no on Wednesday.

“The American people elected Republicans in November to shake up Washington,” Wagner said, “and yet this 1,700-page monster blocked 160 common-sense conservative priorities.”

Spending measures such as the one considered this week, called omnibuses, are sprawling, catchall measures that stuff many disparate government funding measures into one mammoth bill, usually hundreds of pages long.

“Essentially what it is is a bunch of people in a back room negotiating how we should spend trillions of dollars,” said McCaskill.

Often, McCaskill was one of just a handful of Democrats who voted against omnibuses endorsed and signed by President Barack Obama.
“What I’ve found in the past, when we’ve had time to scrub them, is that stuff was getting into these bills that had never seen the light of day before,” McCaskill said. “There had been no cost-benefit analysis, no hearings. . . . That’s why I voted no.”

McCaskill said she had “all hands on deck” in her office this week going through every line of the 1,665-page bill before she’d commit to vote for it.

“We are comfortable it . . . prioritizes the right things and there’s no kick in the shins for ordinary people in it,” she said.

The bill includes funding for a number of causes McCaskill supports and can tout as she campaigns. Among them: $1.1 billion for 14 Super Hornet fighter jets, which are manufactured in St. Louis, and $2 billion for the National Institutes of Health, which provided nearly $509 million in grant money last year to research institutions in Missouri.

The bill also provides more than $1 billion to address the opioid crisis — overdose deaths in Missouri are at record highs — and $1.3 billion to provide a permanent health care fix for more than 22,000 retired miners and their widows. The miners had been set to lose those benefits at the end of last year, when Congress passed a four-month extension.

McCaskill says she’s open to working with Trump on shared goals such as investing in infrastructure and lowering prescription-drug prices. She’s been invited to the White House twice. The first time, she declined in order to attend a previously scheduled meeting with the Missouri teachers’ association. Trump’s aides had said he would follow up with a phone call, but he never did.

The second time, McCaskill attended a reception for senators hosted by the president and first lady Melania Trump.

“I would be happy to visit with the president on anything,” McCaskill said, “but I think he’s focused most of his time and energy in only working with Republicans.”

**ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH**

**Missouri lawmakers sign off on key pieces of $27.8 billion budget**

By Kurt Erickson St. Louis Post-Dispatch, 12 hrs ago

JEFFERSON CITY • Striking a last-minute deal to spare cuts to nearly 8,000 elderly and disabled residents, the Missouri Senate sent the final pieces of a $27.8 billion budget to Gov. Eric Greitens on Thursday.
Capping months of talks, the action came just a day before the constitutional deadline for lawmakers to act on the spending plan for the fiscal year beginning July 1.

Working late Thursday, the Senate approved legislation that would avert the cuts to the 8,000 recipients and keep intact a tax credit affecting another 100,000 elderly renters.

The agreement that pushed the budget across the finish line was approved on a bipartisan 28-5 vote. It would raid a number of special state funds for enough cash to fill a gap that opponents said would hurt the state’s most vulnerable populations.

Supporters said the plan could generate $35 million in excessive funds that have been paid into programs that regulate, for example, doctors, engineers and veterinarians.

“This is a one-time thing. It would not happen every year,” said Shalonn “Kiki” Curls, D-Kansas City.

The proposal must be taken up by the House when it returns to action next week.

Under a budget plan proposed by Greitens in February, an estimated 20,000 elderly and disabled people would have lost medical coverage through a proposed change in eligibility guidelines. Under an alternative approved by the House, nearly 100,000 elderly renters would have lost a tax credit worth an average of $500.

A compromise approved by both chambers would have left 8,000 nursing home residents and in-home care recipients in the cross-hairs. Democrats said without the fund sweep alternative, the budget plan would have hurt not only the elderly, but could result in job losses if nursing homes close. In addition, the people affected by the change could be forced to seek health care at hospitals, where it is more expensive.

In the meantime, the $3.4 billion funding plan for education was less contentious after the Legislature fully funded the school aid formula.

The budget also fully funds state aid for school transportation programs at $105 million.
The state’s public universities will see a 6.5 percent cut in core state funding. But, the total amount spent remains higher than what Greitens had sought by about $50 million. University of Missouri System President Mun Choi said the university appreciated efforts to reduce cuts to the four-campus system.

“We are always working to be efficient and effective with our resources and we will continue those efforts to ensure we are providing an accessible and affordable education for our students while serving the citizens of Missouri,” Choi said.

Graduate programs at Harris-Stowe State University had been set to lose a $1 million earmark, but negotiations by Sen. Jamilah Nasheed, D-St. Louis, resulted in $250,000 being restored.

The budget plan includes no tax increases and no general wage increases for most state workers, who are the lowest paid in the nation.

“I think it’s unconscionable that we don’t allow raises for our state employees,” said Rep. Bob Burns, D-south St. Louis County. “Our state employees need a pay raise.”

The plan gives Secretary of State Jay Ashcroft $1.5 million to educate voters about a new voter photo identification law.

“We look forward to working with legislators in their districts to ensure every Missourian understands the new photo ID law and knows that if you are registered to vote, you can vote,” Ashcroft said.

The budget also calls for the removal of new security checkpoints at the Capitol. Critics said the metal detectors were pointless because concealed weapons are allowed in the Capitol. Rather than force visitors and workers to queue up for the checkpoints, the budget calls for five additional Capitol police officers to provide security in the building.

The budget includes no significant increase in money for road and bridge upgrades, but it does ban spending on the development of toll highways. It also eliminates grants for drunk driving checkpoints, which are used by police to crack down on DWI.
The budget blueprint also cuts eight administrative law judges who oversee worker compensation cases at the Department of Labor. And it reduces inspectors for prevailing wage laws.

Sen. Maria Chappelle-Nadal, D-University City, temporarily held up passage of the budget because negotiators slashed the amount of money to be set aside for a home buyout program she is championing.

Chappelle-Nadal had sought $12 million to begin buying houses near the contaminated West Lake Landfill in Bridgeton. That earmark was reduced to $1 million in the final budget agreement.

She said the lower amount might help only nine homeowners out of more than 100.

“We’re picking and choosing who lives and who dies. That’s as simple as it is to me,” Chappelle-Nadal said. “I’m watching closely. And I’m going to keep watching closely, as if they were my own babies.”

Missouri Senate strikes deal on final budget issue: Aid for the elderly, disabled

BY JASON HANCOCK
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JEFFERSON CITY - Thousands of disabled and elderly Missourians may have narrowly avoided losing assistance for in-home and nursing home care Thursday night, after lawmakers struck a deal on the state’s $27 billion budget.

Their fate is now in the hands of the Missouri House.

Legislators gave final approval to the state budget after hours of debate Thursday, including a funding hike for public education and a steep cut for colleges and universities.

But the biggest fight of the day focused on state aid for the elderly and disabled.
Gov. Eric Greitens’ proposed budget called for saving $52 million by requiring people to display more severe disabilities to qualify for in-home care or nursing home services. The result would have been 20,000 people losing state aid.

The House reversed the cut in its version of the budget, paying for in-home and nursing home care by passing a bill ending a property tax credit for low-income seniors who rent their homes.

A Democratic filibuster ensured that the tax credit repeal could not pass the Senate. So budget negotiators tried to strike a compromise: Half the cuts would be rolled back, but the other half of the cuts would remain unless the Senate repealed the senior citizen property tax credit.

The result of the compromise: Nearly 8,000 people would lose assistance.

But instead of repealing the credit — which Democrats argued would simply be pitting low-income senior citizens against each other — the Senate took another path Thursday.

Sens. Ryan Silvey, a Kansas City Republican, and Kiki Curls, a Kansas City Democrat, proposed authorizing a review of special state funds to find excess money that could be used to raise $35.4 million and avoid the cuts to in-home and nursing home care.

“This is a one-time thing,” Curls said. “It would not happen every year.”

A group of Republican senators balked at the plan, saying using one-time money to fund an ongoing program is simply a budget gimmick. They pressed for the Senate to follow through with the elimination of the senior property tax credit.

Renters can qualify for the tax credit if their income is less than $27,500 a year if single or $29,500 a year if married. Roughly 100,000 Missourians take advantage of the credit, with the average credit being around $500.

But the concerns of critics fell on deaf ears, and the Senate voted overwhelmingly to go with Curls’ and Silvey’s plan.

The House still needs to approve the idea before the legislature adjourns at 6 p.m. May 12. If it doesn’t, the cuts that result in 8,000 people losing state aid would go into effect.

Among the other highlights of the budget approved Thursday:

• K-12 public schools received $48 million more than they did this year, bringing total education spending to $3.4 billion. That will fully fund the education formula for the first time ever.
Funding for Missouri’s public colleges and universities was cut by 6.6 percent. The House wanted to cut the University of Missouri System even deeper, suggesting a 9 percent cut. But the Senate insisted cuts be equal for every university.

The Missouri State Employees Retirement System, commonly known as MOSERS, received $45 million in additional funding. The House suggested a $15 million funding bump, but Senate leaders worried that underfunding the state’s pension fund could have long-term negative impacts on the state’s budget.

The number of inspectors employed in the Missouri Department of Labor was cut from 11 to nine. The inspectors enforce state labor laws, such as the minimum wage and child labor restrictions. The budget also cuts eight administrative law judges from the department’s budget. The judges adjudicate workers compensation and other labor cases.

A $3 million buyout program for people living within 3 miles of a radioactive waste site near St. Louis was cut to $1 million.

“This has been a tough budget year, as everybody knows,” said House Budget chairman Scott Fitzpatrick, a Shell Knob Republican. “There’s going to be a lot of cuts not everyone is going to love. But that being said, our job is to pass a balanced budget.”

Lawmakers entered the year facing a huge budget shortfall, with state revenue lagging far short of the level needed to fund the budget passed by lawmakers last year. As a result, Greitens and his predecessor, Gov. Jay Nixon, were forced to cut more than $300 million from this year’s budget.

Fitzpatrick said growing spending on Medicaid, the federal health insurance program for the poor and disabled, has put a strain on the state’s finances. In fiscal year 2006, he noted, Medicaid cost the state $1.2 billion. This year it will cost nearly $2.2 billion.

Adding to the budget woes is the fact that in 2015, lawmakers voted to allow corporations to exclude income made in out-of-state sales or services from their Missouri corporate income taxes.

That legislation, which received bipartisan support at the time, was supposed to cost the state $15 million. But it actually has cost the state more than $200 million in corporate tax collections.

That $200 million reduction is on top of a $127 million phase-out of the corporate franchise tax approved in 2011.

The tough budget picture was compounded when Greitens was two weeks late getting his budget proposal to the legislature. That shortened the timeline for lawmakers to finish their work.
The fact that the Senate has been *roiled with infighting among Republicans* that has largely paralyzed the chamber made many wonder if the legislature would be able to finish its work on the budget before the constitutional deadline of 6 p.m. Friday.

But the logjam finally broke by Thursday, and both the House and Senate were able to send the budget to Greitens. He must now approve or veto the various budget bills before they go into effect July 1.

“We’ve had to make some tough choices,” said Senate Appropriations Committee chairman Dan Brown, a Rolla Republican. “But you play the cards you’re dealt.”

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**Major cuts to higher education in proposed state budget**


By Lindsey Berning

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. - The Missouri House passed a $27 billion state budget Thursday the day before the congressional deadline.

The budget for the fiscal year starting in July is now in review in the state Senate and will then move on to Gov. Eric Greitens.

In the current proposal, public universities and colleges across the state would take a major cut to funding.

“The governor’s recommendation cut a little over 9 percent from all the institutions in the state," said Rep. Scott Fitzpatrick, the chair of the House budget committee. "The budget that the general assembly has passed restores that to a 6.5 percent cut from last year."
That translates to roughly a $64 million cut to higher education institutions across the state, according to Fitzpatrick.

**The expected cut to the University of Missouri System would equal about $29.5 million, according to John Fougere, a spokesman for the UM System.**

**THE CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION**

**In Higher Ed, Adjuncts May Have Most to Lose If Obamacare Is Repealed**

No MU mention

Perhaps no group working on college campuses had more at stake in Thursday’s vote in the U.S. House of Representatives to repeal the Affordable Care Act than contingent faculty members. Full-time faculty and staff members can typically count on their institutions to provide health insurance, but most part-time professors are on their own. If the current law, also known as Obamacare, is repealed, many adjuncts dread a return to the days when insurance was even more expensive than it is now, completely unaffordable, or even unattainable.

The House voted 217 to 213 to pass the American Health Care Act, a Republican-sponsored bill that would repeal Obamacare and replace it with provisions that critics say would weaken the current law’s protections for people with pre-existing medical conditions and increase costs for older Americans. The bill now goes to the Senate, where it is expected to face a tougher fight for passage.

Ms. Maisto said she is most concerned about the bill passed by the House on Thursday "because of the demographics of the adjunct population, which reflects the demographics of the people who are going to be most hurt."

In a 2012 report, the Coalition on the Academic Workforce noted that more than 70 percent of adjuncts who responded to its survey and provided information about their age were between the ages of 36 and 65. About 9 percent of respondents were over 65.

Even under Obamacare, affording health insurance isn’t easy for adjuncts. Carol Weatherford, who teaches English at several colleges around Kalamazoo, Mich., now pays about $500 a month for private insurance she purchased via the current law. But her premiums have continued to go up each year, and this year rising costs forced her to downgrade to a plan with a deductible of about $7,000.
Ms. Weatherford is teaching seven classes at three colleges this semester, and said she makes too much money to qualify for low-income subsidies under the Affordable Care Act. "But I’ve got peace of mind that I haven’t had in a long time," she said. "I’m a very healthy person, but one of these days I’m going to get sick or I’m going to have an accident. I need to have insurance because something’s bound to happen."

Cost Considerations

Obamacare has made a big difference for many adjuncts and their families. Charlotte Wulf taught as a lecturer in English for 18 years at Pennsylvania State University at State College, where she was allowed to purchase health insurance through the institution’s group plan. In 2002, she and her family moved to Maryland, where the rules were different. She has taught at Stevenson University and the Community College of Baltimore County, neither of which offer health benefits to part-time faculty members.

The initial cost of purchasing private insurance "was twice as much as our mortgage," Ms. Wulf said. The price of covering herself, her husband, and one of her two sons rose as high as $3,300 a month. "I mean, you show me the people who can afford $3,300 a month," she said. The soaring costs forced her family to go without insurance for about a year before the Affordable Care Act came along.

Ms. Wulf is now eligible for Medicare, but her husband, who is self-employed, is still insured through Obamacare. "I’m very panicky," she said. Based on the Republican plans for replacing the current law, "I’m worried either we’re not going to be able to afford it, or it won’t cover everything we need to cover, or in some way it will be even worse than things are now."

Ms. Maisto said she doesn’t know of any organized opposition to the American Health Care Act by contingent faculty members, though she added that "certainly adjuncts have been part of the broader outcry and resistance to the more extreme policies that are coming out of the administration and the Republican Congress."

She hopes that "moderate Republican voices" in the Senate will head off the worst of any potential effects on older Americans and those with pre-existing conditions.

She also hopes that the threat to adjuncts’ ability to buy affordable health insurance may inspire more organizing. "That’s the only way you can effectively preserve health care these days," she said.