



MU News Bureau

Daily Clips Packet

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'Frail relationships' between lawmakers and University of Missouri system improving

By: Sara Maslar-Donar

Watch the story: <http://www.abc17news.com/news/frail-relationships-between-lawmakers-and-university-of-missouri-system-improving/656405234>

COLUMBIA, Mo. - State lawmakers and University of Missouri system officials said Tuesday they are continuing to repair a "frail relationship" that began in 2015 after protests at the system's flagship school, Mizzou.

During months of fallout, Missouri lawmakers said they felt like system leaders handled the situation poorly and have since punished the MU System in subsequent budget sessions with cuts aimed directly at the system.

"We as legislators were getting a lot of feedback from constituents that were really not pleased with the way things played out," said state budget chair Rep. Scott Fitzpatrick. "When that happens, there's a lot of pressure from the legislative perspective to do something and really the only thing you can do is appropriate less money or not appropriate more money."

But Fitzpatrick said changes in leadership and an effort to repair relationships by the system have not gone unnoticed.

"I think that one of the things my colleagues and I have expected and really told the university system is we want less stories of how you are doing dumb things sometimes," he said. "They've done a good job curbing those things and have seen an increase in responsibility of the system."

MU System President Mun Choi said the improvement comes from being prepared to listen to advice from lawmakers and finding ways to be better stewards of resources from the state.

"Not only through appropriations but also through tuition dollars that are being paid by Missouri residents," he said.

Choi said that relationship needs to be sustained.

"Having that strong leadership position and also that strong relationship with the citizens of Missouri will help us weather through those hiccups that we're going to eventually have," he said.

Dusty Schnieders is the system's newest lobbyist. He was hired last month as the director of governmental affairs after Choi called off a search for executive director of governmental affairs.

Previously the chief of staff for Senate president pro tem Ron Richards, Schieders is familiar with the day-to-day workings of the Capitol, and Choi said he will be instrumental in helping connect university system leaders to lawmakers in Jefferson City.

Schnieders said knowing the process and lawmakers will help him continue to repair those frail relationships.

"My first goal is to get in there and meet with as many legislators as possible to tell them all the good things that the university system is doing," he said.

In his previous job, Schieders said he noticed the positive change in that relationship between the university system and lawmakers. He attributes it to Choi's leadership.

"He's really making a lot of headway and the elected officials are liking the leadership he's shown so far," he said.

The effort to educate lawmakers on the university's system's position as one of the state's greatest assets, and keeping positive stories in the cycle, could help the system avoid financial retaliation.

"Dusty will make opportunities available for me and other leaders to meet with legislative leaders to share the stories about what we provide in terms of an outstanding, affordable education and the research our faculty members perform that benefit the lives of Missouri citizens," he said. "Whether that's in developing new bio joins to better crops for better yields for farmers in Missouri, those are the types of stories we need to share."

Missourinet

Missouri budget leader: federal tax proposals make state budget projections more challenging

By Alisa Nelson

House Budget Committee Chairman Scott Fitzpatrick, R-Shell Knob, says forecasting next year's state budget situation is tougher than it has been in previous years he's served in the Missouri Legislature. Fitzpatrick tells Columbia radio station KSSZ that proposed changes to federal tax policies are part of the issue.

"It throws a bit of uncertainty in the process that I have not experienced," he says.

If the GOP tax plan being drafted in the U.S. House is passed, its impacts will be felt at the state level. Among other things, the legislation would lower the corporate tax rate to 20%, limit the mortgage interest deduction and eliminate a deduction that covers high medical costs for seniors. It would also repeal tax-free tuition waivers to graduate teaching or research assistants. The provision means those college students could have their federal taxes increase up to 350%.

Fitzpatrick says figuring out the right levels for state taxes is a balancing act.

"There's a place where that tax rate is too high and people won't want to come and then there's a place where the tax rate is so low that you may get plenty of economic activity but your rates and tax structure are inadequate to fund the government," he says.

According to Fitzpatrick, it's too soon to tell what type of funds Mizzou can expect in next year's state budget.

"As a state legislature, we need to realize that the University of Missouri is one of, if not the greatest, asset that the state has in a lot of ways and that we need to make sure that it's set up to succeed," he says.

Fitzpatrick discussed the state's upcoming budget at the Daniel Boone Regional Library in Columbia on Tuesday.

House budget leader: Lawmakers should act to prevent loss from federal tax changes

By: Rudi Keller

Missouri lawmakers should change tax laws to prevent any action taken by Congress from cutting state revenue, House Budget Committee Chairman Scott Fitzpatrick said Tuesday.

An increase in the standard deduction is the single biggest item that has lawmakers and any program dependent on state dollars worried about the impact of a federal tax overhaul. Missouri law makes the state standard deduction equal to the federal deduction and with 72 percent of filers using the standard deduction instead of itemizing, the potential loss is as much as \$1 billion.

Missouri could change the law to use a fixed dollar amount rather than the federally set deduction, Fitzpatrick told reporters after discussing state budget challenges at a Columbia Chamber of Commerce luncheon. While many of members of the General Assembly dominated by conservative Republicans would be reluctant to vote for what could be called a tax increase, a loss of 10 percent or more in state revenue would be devastating, Fitzpatrick said.

“If it is \$1 billion, I’ll convince them,” he said.

The current standard deduction is \$6,300 for an individual and \$12,600 for a married couple. Tax plans produced in the U.S. House and the U.S. Senate would change those amounts to \$12,000 for individuals and \$24,000 for married couples. Individuals would pay up to \$336 less on their state returns and married couples \$672 less on 2.1 million tax returns.

The chamber hasn’t taken a stand on the federal tax plan, said Jerry Dowell, government affairs director at the chamber. On Friday, he said, members will have a chance to ask U.S. Rep. Vicky Hartzler, R-Harrisonville, about the plan. He said he anticipates questions on several changes being proposed, including plans to limit or eliminate the deduction for home mortgage interest.

The lunch program at the library drew about 50 people, including two local members of the Budget Committee, state Reps. Sara Walsh, R-Ashland, and Kip Kendrick, D-Columbia, as well as University of Missouri System President Mun Choi. In his talk, Fitzpatrick said the upcoming federal debate on taxes will make it difficult to get a clear picture of future revenue before lawmakers return to work in January.

“It is going to be difficult to come up with an estimate of revenue with that hanging over our head,” he said.

The estimate will also have to account for a 2014 tax cut that lowers state rates when growth targets are met, Fitzpatrick said. The first cut under that law will take effect Jan. 1 and will lower revenue by \$90 million in the first six months of the year and by about \$150 million in the fiscal year that begins July 1, he said.

Fitzpatrick said he would prefer that Congress just adjust rates downward if it wants to cut federal taxes.

“I would prefer to see rate reductions at the federal level, for one reason that it makes my job a lot simpler, not having to deal with it,” he said. “But I am sure that Congress does not care what I say.”

Missouri’s income tax is closely tied to the federal tax system, using the same adjusted gross income and, like the standard deduction, allowing the same itemized deductions claimed on federal forms. The ability of lawmakers to change any particular piece of current law would depend on the way various constitutional provisions are interpreted.

The Hancock Amendment to the state constitution limits the state’s total tax revenue and a modification made in the 1990s sets a cap on the size of any tax increase enacted by lawmakers without a statewide vote. Another constitution provision authorizes lawmakers to make adjustments to the state tax code in reaction to federal changes and apply them retroactively.

“I think we would probably have the ability to react to a change in federal policy if we found it necessary,” Fitzpatrick told the audience. “I think the willingness of the General Assembly to do that would depend on the severity of the impact from the federal changes.”

Walsh said she has no opinion on whether the federal tax cut is a good idea for Missouri.

“I am just learning and don’t have any thoughts on that right now,” she said.

The size of the potential cut to state revenue is too big to absorb and maintain state services, Kendrick said. Some lawmakers began to realize that the standard deduction increase would mandate deep cuts after the first tax outlines were released, he said.

“I wish we would have had a broader discussion this last legislative session,” he said. “It will be, I think, somewhat tricky to push through in a conservative General Assembly, to get people to understand that this is not a tax increase.”

MISSOURIAN

Budget chairman addresses possible federal impact on Missouri

By: Kathryn Hardison

The threat that a federal tax overhaul could slash almost \$1 billion of Missouri's revenue has clouded the Missouri budget outlook before the beginning of the 2018 legislative session, said House Budget Chairman Scott Fitzpatrick.

Fitzpatrick, R-Shell Knob, spoke to the Columbia Chamber of Commerce Tuesday about what to expect in the upcoming session. As budget committee members attempt to reach a consensus on a revenue estimate before the start of the session, he said, they'll need to consider the possible impact of the federal tax cut and a 2014 Missouri tax cut [that takes effect Jan. 1](#).

Congress is considering a federal tax cut plan that would nearly double standard deductions. Because of a Missouri statute that links standard deductions on state tax returns to the federal level, the deduction increase would have a major effect on state tax revenues.

Missouri revenue could be reduced by \$500 million to \$1 billion. The potential impact was first reported by the [Columbia Daily Tribune](#).

"Unless Congress acts quickly and passes something in the next two weeks, which may or may not happen, it's going to be difficult to come up with an estimate of revenues with that hanging over our head," Fitzpatrick said.

If the federal tax overhaul impacts the state, Fitzpatrick said Missouri legislators would have a strong incentive to change tax laws so the state could continue implementing a tax cut law that goes into effect Jan. 1.

The [2014 tax cut](#) will lower income tax rates if state general revenue reaches \$150 million. However, if the change in federal tax policy prevents state revenue from growing to the required \$150 million, the Missouri tax policy will not take effect, Fitzpatrick said.

"I would prefer to see rate reductions at the federal level," Fitzpatrick said. "But I'm sure that Congress does not care what I say, so we'll see what they do anyway."

Almost 80 people attended the luncheon at the Columbia Public Library, including UM System President Mun Choi and state Reps. Kip Kendrick, D-Columbia, and Sara Walsh, R-Ashland.

Kendrick said Missourians should be concerned about what's happening on the federal level.

"I think there is a reason to at least be aware and start the discussion," Kendrick said. "People need to reach out to their people in Congress, (their) senators," if they have concerns about what it would do to state revenue.

Fitzpatrick also said his goal is to "hold down" mandatory expenses. He said revenue growth has been sporadic but decent — around 4 percent — but the cost of mandatory expenses has been more. In particular, he mentioned the Medicaid program.

"In a perfect world, everybody's going to have health insurance, but as a state government, we don't have unlimited debt issuance capabilities and we also want to invest in other things, like education," he said.

Fitzpatrick said it's too soon to know if more cuts will be made to the MU budget, but his goal is "to do no harm."

"We need to realize that the University of Missouri is one of, if not the greatest, asset that the state has," Fitzpatrick said. "My goal is to try to help get the university in a position to succeed, get back on track with enrollment and get more freshmen coming to Mizzou."

Choi said he understands why the school has experienced recent budget cuts, but the lack of funding makes it more challenging to provide all students with the same level of experiences.

"We're looking at every opportunity to grow our revenue where we can ... (and) cut expenses so that the key primary objectives of the University of Missouri — to train students, to perform research and engage with the community — that those core activities are supported," Choi said.



House Budget Chairman addresses Missouri's 2019 fiscal year

By: David Rothchild

Watch the story: <http://www.komu.com/news/house-budget-chairman-addresses-missouri-s-2019-fiscal-year>

COLUMBIA - Rep. Scott Fitzpatrick, House Budget Chairman, discussed Missouri's 2019 fiscal year budget with Columbia Chamber of Commerce on Tuesday.

Fitzpatrick, a Republican from Shell Knob, said the first phase of tax reduction will reduce state revenues by about \$150-160 million for the 2018 fiscal year, which concludes June 30th. By that date, he said Missouri's revenue needs to grow 4.25 percent from the previous fiscal year for the budget to be balanced.

One of his goals for the upcoming fiscal year is to "hold down mandatory expenses." At the beginning of this year, Fitzpatrick said one out of every six Missourians was on Medicaid. However, he said something needs to be done to rein in Medicaid's cost.

In regards to the Missouri Department of Transportation, Fitzpatrick said it has been able to match federal funding. Despite this fact, he said the state has a long-term problem and needs to "burn down the road fund balance."

He added that Missouri will have to tie its transportation revenue to inflation, and eventually address how electric cars are incorporated into the gas tax for the 2019 fiscal year.

Fitzpatrick also addressed state legislators' relationship with the University of Missouri.

"I think that the changes in leadership at the university have been positive ones," he said. "As a state legislature, we need to realize that the University of Missouri is one of, if not the greatest, asset that the state has in a lot of ways."

Mun Choi, University of Missouri System President, said the relationship has been improving.

“The tuition increases that have occurred during the past 20 years, they all resulted because of reductions in state appropriation,” he said. “And as Representative Fitzpatrick mentioned, the state is also undergoing some financial challenges, so we understand the reasons why our budget is being cut year after year.”

Choi said the system is looking at opportunities to increase revenue in order to keep MU’s core values - “to train students, to perform research and engage with the community” - intact.



You Paid For It – Univ. of Missouri spends \$473K on PR firms while slashing its budget

Watch the story: <http://kplr11.com/2017/11/14/you-paid-for-it-univ-of-missouri-spends-473k-on-pr-firms-while-slashing-its-budget/>

COLUMBIA, Mo. – The University of Missouri is spending big bucks on public relations despite having to slash \$100 million from the budget in the face of plunging enrollment.

Almost 500 university employees were laid off as part of those cuts. Some nearly finished dormitories were closed because of declining attendance.

But school officials still found \$473,000 to hire a PR firm to polish its image back in 2016. The deal with that company will run thru 2018.

In the meantime, they've signed on with another PR firm. This deal is worth \$1.2 million over three years, for a grand total of more than \$1.7 million spent to mend the school's image.

Maurice Graham, head of the University of Missouri's Board of Curators, said it's critical for the university to turn around the enrollment decline. He believes that PR will help improve the school's image after the uproar at the school in the fall of 2015.

Others aren't so sure about this deal.

You Paid For It investigator Elliott Davis spoke with Jenna Robinson, head of the James G. Martin Center for Academic Renewal, a nonprofit think tank on higher education. She said a lot of schools are turning to professional PR firms to improve their image instead of relying on people right on their own campus.

Robinson said the school would be better off using the money for more financial aid to attract more students.

ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

'Poor judgment:' Mizzou police tweets during basketball game backfire

By Ashley Jost

A few tweets Monday night from the University of Missouri-Columbia Police Department during a Mizzou basketball game drew criticism before they were deleted.

[The Tigers were dominating the Wagner College Seahawks](#) Monday night when the Mizzou police tweeted: "Okay but can we talk about how @MizzouHoops is so good it's criminal? About to be a homicide at Mizzou Arena. #MIZ"

The tweet didn't go over well with students, alumni and fans, so the department tweeted again, noting this "is not a real homicide."

The tweet was later deleted.

Mizzou spokesman Christian Basi said a new officer recently received permission to help run the social media account.

"Last night he posted a tweet that was immediately recognized as inappropriate," Basi told the Post-Dispatch Tuesday. "It was a mistake and was taken down as quickly as possible, and the officer and others will be going through training related to social media interaction in the near future."

Among the people to call out the tweet was alumnus and Washington Post sports reporter Jacob Bogage, who was then blocked by the Mizzou police department Twitter account.

After a thread of tweets in which Bogage described the initial tweets as "insensitive, crass and rude," and questioned the police department's decision to block him, the department reversed course.

An officer apologized to Bogage, chalking it all up to "poor judgment."

Aside from Monday's Twitter kerfuffle, the department's efforts to connect with the campus community through social media had "been making strides," Basi said.

Goofy tweets about Halloween, urinating in public on game day and mocking the cold weather have drawn dozens of retweets and likes during the last few weeks.

Mizzou police delete ‘inappropriate’ tweet during Tigers’ basketball game

By: Pete Grathoff

People at Mizzou are thrilled that the men’s basketball team is on the rise now after the Tigers won 27 total games in the previous three seasons.

But it’s important to remember that no matter how excited you get about your basketball team’s success, you should be careful what you tweet. This lesson is not limited to Mizzou supporters or even college basketball fans. It goes for anyone on Twitter who is watching a game.

The latest to regret a tweet is the University of Missouri police department, which wrote this at halftime of the Tigers’ 99-55 win over Wagner on Monday night: “Okay can we talk about how @MizzouHoops is so good it’s criminal? About to be a homicide at Mizzou Arena #MIZ”

The first part of the tweet seemed good, but the second sentence? Not so much. It’s probably not a good idea to joke about homicide, particularly if you are a police department.

The University of Missouri police department quickly deleted the tweet, but they’re never really gone, as you can see from this screenshot.

Christian Basi, the director of the University of Missouri news bureau, [told the St. Louis Post-Dispatch](#) that a new officer recently received permission to run the Twitter account.

“Last night he posted a tweet that was immediately recognized as inappropriate,” Basi told the Post-Dispatch Tuesday. “It was a mistake and was taken down as quickly as possible, and the officer and others will be going through training related to social media interaction in the near future.”

Not long after deleting that message, the Mizzou police tweeted: “of course we are kidding... no homicide. Just pure talent”



MUPD removes "homicide" tweets and apologizes

By: Matt Schmittiel

Watch the story: <http://www.komu.com/news/mupd-removes-homicide-tweets-and-apologizes>

COLUMBIA - MUPD apologized after tweeting out messages that received some critical feedback.

The Mizzou Basketball team won big Monday night defeating Wagner College with a score of 99-55. The MUPD tried to show its support for the team around halftime with some "humorous" tweets.

The first tweet stated, "Okay but can we talk about how @MizzouHoops is so good it's criminal? About to be a homicide at Mizzou Arena. #MIZ"

There were a few responses to the tweets, mostly stating disbelief. Then, MUPD tweeted, "Obviously the homicide is not a real homicide. Just pure talent out there tonight, folks."

MUPD's Lieutenant Buddy Anliker said the department has had recent success using humor in its tweets, but said these particular tweets were in poor judgment.

"It was an unfortunate attempt of humor. We recently asked one of our younger officers to help us with the Twitter account, and we have had a lot of success. He has done an excellent job of interacting with our community with some other tweets that involved humor," Anliker said. "We apologize and regret that it went out, and once we noticed a negative feedback we automatically took it down."

"We wanted to show our support for Mizzou sports, and it's unfortunate it is taking away from the great win last night and we regret that also. . . we just want to apologize," Anliker said.



MUPD deletes tweet after backlash on social media

MUPD says tweet was joke

By: Kirstie Crawford

Watch the story: <http://www.abc17news.com/news/mupd-deletes-tweet-after-backlash-on-social-media/656325619>

COLUMBIA, Mo. - During a Mizzou basketball game Monday night, the University of Missouri Police Department tweeted what they said was a joke in reference to how well the team was playing.

The tweet read, "Okay can we talk about how @MizzouHoops is so good it's criminal? About to be a homicide at Mizzou Arena #MIZ."

By tweeting that statement, MUPD did not follow the social media guidelines set by the University of Missouri's [identity standards](#), which says any MU employee or contractor hired by MU that contributes to any MU social media, should follow.

One guideline states a comment should be re-read to make sure it can't be misconstrued as negative or inappropriate before posting it.

Another guideline states the person posting on social media should treat it as seriously and professionally as any other aspect of their job, and if a mistake was made, admit to it.

After a few people on Twitter reacted to the tweet from MUPD with replies of dissatisfaction, the official Mizzou Twitter account, and then MUPD, clarified the tweet was a joke.

Eventually MUPD deleted the tweet and even blocked a follower, but later apologized to that person via direct messaging.

MUPD and the university's spokesperson said the officer was extremely apologetic about the tweet.



MU Police face criticism for series of tweets

By: Tommy Sladek

The University of Missouri-Columbia's police department received criticism from students and alumni after sending out a series of tweets Monday night.

The tweets came as Mizzou's men's basketball team put on a show against visiting Wagner College.

In response, MU Police wrote, "okay but can we talk about how @mizzouhoops is so good it's criminal? about to be a homicide at Mizzou arena."

As social media platforms become more and more popular, police departments across the country are taking to twitter to better connect with students and the community.

But Monday night's tweet crossed the line according to sophomore Connie Davis.

"It's cool that they're trying to be hip I guess and relate to their younger viewers or followers, but their word choice wasn't the best," said Davis.

Shortly after deleting the tweet, the department said, "of course we are kidding...no homicide, just pure talent."

The Tigers went on to win the game 99-55.

KRCG 13 reached out numerous times to both MU Police and the university, but no one was made available for comment.



ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

[Forum discusses Missouri campus 2 years after protests](#)

COLUMBIA, Mo. (AP) — **Two years after protests over racial discrimination rocked the University of Missouri-Columbia, participants at a forum said progress has been made but that efforts to educate people about the issues raised during the demonstrations must continue.**

Missouri System President Mun Choi, Board of Curators Chairman Maurice Graham and other university officials were among about 200 people who attended the forum Monday, the Columbia Daily Tribune [reported](#) . It was sponsored by the Department of Black Studies.

Stephanie Shonekan, chairwoman of the department, said the forum highlighted changes made since the 2015 protests led to the resignations of then-System President Tim Wolfe and then-Columbia campus Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin and drew national attention to the school. The protests included a hunger strike by a graduate student and the school's football team threatening not to play a game unless administrators addressed issues raised by the demonstrations.

She said even Choi's presence was progress, noting that Wolfe angered many protesters while president with his slow response to their concerns and by ignoring them when they blocked his car during a homecoming parade.

The resignations of Wolfe and Loftin were condemned by then-presidential candidate Donald Trump, who predicted they would "set something in motion that is going to be a disaster for a long period of time."

"Our role also on this campus is to serve as the intellectual side of black life at the University of Missouri," Shonekan said during the forum. "Tonight we want to talk about how far we have come. And we wanted to push back against the other president who said we would be a disaster. We have not been a disaster. He's wrong."

Keynote speaker Marshall Allen, who was part of the Concerned Student 1950 group that led the protests, said problems still remain. He cited recently enacted speech codes that were seen as a response to the 2015 demonstrations, after protesters demonstrated at the financial aid office and in the office of interim Vice Chancellor Chuck Henson. The codes prohibit entering offices with vital university records, protests in or outside of official meetings and camping on campus.

"The reason why we can claim these (speech codes) and promote these as reactionary is because each of these have direct correlation to the events and activities that occurred in the fall of 2015," Allen said.

He noted that last week when white demonstrators quietly unfurled signs asking the university to divest from fossil fuel companies, Choi and Graham spoke to them and reaffirmed the school's commitment to free speech.

"Who exactly do these policies apply to?" Allen asked.

After the forum, Choi pledged the policies on protests will apply to all students and faculty "regardless of their background or experience."

The forum was proof that the university wants to address continuing issues of diversity, said Johanna Milord, a doctoral student in counseling psychology. She attended a different school in

2015 and said the Missouri protests as well as national demonstrations over blacks being killed by police were barely discussed there.

"I think that this is a place where the conversation is happening and that is more than I have been exposed to in the past," Milord said.

Similar stories ran locally and state wide



MU Dorm Rental Program 'Nearly Sold Out' Home Football Season

By: Mitch Legan

The University of Missouri football team played its final home game of the year on Saturday, which also marks the end of a football season dorm rental program.

The goal of the new program was to help counteract financial problems linked with lower enrollment. Visitors for home football games were able to rent a two-room, four-bed suite for \$120 a night.

MU representative Liz McCune says the program proved successful with visiting fans.

“We were sold out – nearly sold out – for every game this season. I believe it was just six rooms that we had cancellations on that we weren’t able to fill before a game. So we were essentially at capacity for every game this season,” she said.

McCune says the University will decide whether or not to bring the program back toward the end of the school year.



Nation's Top Lawman Now Refusing to Answer Questions About the Rule of Law

By Jeremy Stahl

Attorney General Jeff Sessions is testifying before the House Judiciary Committee on Tuesday. The ranking Democratic member on that committee, Rep. John Conyers, opened his time with a series of yes/no questions about basic democratic norms that Sessions refused to answer clearly.

The video of Sessions dancing around these questions, asking the 88-year-old Conyers to repeat himself, and obfuscating with responses that could be interpreted any number of ways might have been considered in another time to be fairly outrageous conduct for an attorney general. In Donald Trump's America, it is apparently considered pretty typical.

Sessions spent the exchange giving nonanswers to very simple questions about basic concepts of constitutional democracy and the rule of law, as well as to a question about a previous promise he had made to Congress to recuse himself from Justice Department investigations that would involve Hillary Clinton.

Each refusal to answer should be enraging and terrifying, but maybe it isn't anymore.

Here's the first exchange with Conyers:

Conyers: Yes or no, please. In a functioning democracy, is it common for the leader of the country to order the criminal justice system to retaliate against his political opponents?

Sessions: That a question?

Conyers: That's the question.

Sessions: Is it proper? Is that what you..

Conyers: No.

....

Sessions: But I didn't quite catch the beginning of the question. I'm sorry.

Conyers: All right. In a functioning democracy, is it common for the leader of the country to order the criminal justice system to retaliate against his political opponents?

Sessions: Mr. Conyers I would say that it's—the department of justice can never be used to retaliate politically against opponents and that would be wrong.

Conyers: I interpret that as no.

Sessions: My answer stands for itself, I guess.

Again, this was an insanely basic question. *In functioning democracies do leaders use the criminal justice system to punish political enemies?* Rather than simply answering the question, *No, that's not how functioning democracies work*, he responded that the Department of Justice “cannot be used” to retaliate politically and that would be “wrong” for it to happen. Of course, though, it can be used to do so! President Richard Nixon did just that and it was the second article of impeachment against him passed by this very House Judiciary Committee.

As Conyers noted, this was all relevant because President Donald Trump has used his Twitter to repeatedly encourage his DOJ to investigate his political enemies.

Trump had said at the start of his administration that he did not want to go after Clinton including, presumably, for the **hokey** “Uranium One” controversy. In the weeks since special counsel Robert Mueller issued his first indictments against Trump campaign officials in relation to his investigation of Russian election interference, though, the president has stepped up his calls for the DOJ to investigate political adversaries for baseless offenses.

University of Missouri–Columbia law professor, Frank Bowman, has argued in *Slate* that this is an impeachable offense, again noting that it mirrored the second article of impeachment against Nixon approved by the House Judiciary Committee in 1974. Punishing political enemies is also something Trump promised to do during the campaign—in Trump's own words, he said that if he were elected he would put Clinton “in jail.” Also, this is something that they do in authoritarian countries like Russia, which was Conyers’ point.

The Michigan congressman's next question was also along these lines, and Sessions’ refusal to answer the simple yes/no question again was telling.

Conyers: Yes or no, if you can. ... Should the president of the United States make public comments that might influence a pending criminal investigation?

Sessions: Should he take great care in those issues...

Conyers: Could you respond yes or no?

Sessions: Well, I don't know exactly the facts of what you're raising and what amounts to the concern you have. I would say it's improper to influence—it would be—a president cannot improperly influence an investigation.

Conyers: Okay.

Sessions: And I have not been improperly influenced and would not be improperly influenced.

The president speaks his mind. He's bold and direct ability about what he says, the people elected him, but we do our duty every day based on the law and the facts.

Sessions can't even bring himself to say it would be "improper" for the president to influence DOJ investigations. He starts to say it, then he cuts himself off knowing who his boss is. Also, again, it's not just "improper," it's been considered by a previous Judiciary Committee to be an impeachable offense, and it is what leaders do in countries that are not functioning democracies.

Sessions' ultimate phrasing that "a president cannot improperly influence an investigation" is also deeply disturbing. Yes, a president can and Nixon did. Read another way, Sessions could easily be understood to be saying that it can't be considered improper influence if the president does it. If that sounds familiar, **it should**.

For Conyers' final question, he sought to address a **report** released on Monday that Sessions had directed members of his Justice Department to look into investigating Clinton and the "Uranium One" deal, essentially following Trump's repeated requests. The separate issue, as *Just Security* **noted** on Monday, is that Sessions during his confirmation hearings promised to recuse himself from "investigations that involve Secretary Clinton." As *Just Security* also noted, his eventual recusal declaration was much narrower than that promise. Conyers sought a simple answer: Was he recused from investigations of Clinton, as he had promised during his confirmation hearings?

Conyers: For my yes or no question, are you recused from investigations that involve secretary Clinton?

Sessions: Mr. Chairman, it's—I cannot answer that yes or no because under the policies of the Department of Justice, to announce recusal in any investigation would reveal the existence of that investigation and the top ethics officials have advised me I should not do so.

The fact that he would not clarify the scope of his current recusal opens the very real possibility that he is involved in investigations of Clinton, contra his confirmation hearing promise. Again, this is exactly what was indicated by Monday's reporting on a letter that Assistant Attorney General Stephen Boyd sent to Judiciary Committee Chairman Bob Goodlatte outlining Sessions' involvement in the DOJ's consideration of a Clinton investigation.

Again, under another administration all of this would have likely been shocking and disgraceful. For this one, though, it was fairly standard. The attorney general left the door open for himself to break his promise to Congress not to be involved in a Clinton investigation, and he repeatedly left the door open for Trump to take the powers of an autocrat.

This was a theme throughout the entire horrifying spectacle. When Sessions was later asked by Rep. Ted Deutch whether Trump could pre-emptively pardon subjects of the Mueller investigation who might ultimately implicate him in their own alleged crimes—including his own son—Sessions again refused to answer. (It's illegal to take a bribe for a pardon, and it would be similarly illegal to use the pardon power to obstruct justice.)

Ultimately, Deutch summed up Sessions' answers and what they should mean to all Americans.

"You said when you started your testimony here today that there is nothing more important than advancing the rule of law," Deutch said. "When you answer the way you have, it suggests that the rule of law is crumbling at our feet."

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Proposal for GPC to dissolve GSA made behind closed doors

By SKYLER ROSSI

On Oct. 31, the Graduate Professional Council and Graduate Student Association announced to their general assemblies a proposal to dissolve GSA into GPC.

There was no public announcement of the proposal in either organization before Oct. 31, leaving GPC department and committee representatives with only one week to learn and explain it to their departments.

“The functions of Graduate Student Association will be subsumed into the Graduate Professional Council,” the proposal blueprint states. “GSA will cease to operate as a separate body, but the functions it serves to graduate students, including travel grants, professional development programming, and Superior/Outstanding Graduate Student and Staff awards, among others, will continue under the purview of GPC.”

GSA was created in 1968 as the first campus-wide graduate student organization and currently provides resources to graduate students such as travel grants and professional development tools. GPC was created in 1982 as the graduate and professional student government.

A similar proposal was presented to the boards in 2011, which was shot down by GSA.

The boards of the two organizations, particularly GPC President Alex Howe and GSA President Sarah Senff, have painted this proposal in a positive light.

“I think that this proposal is a really fantastic proposal to put into place a more permanent structure that can ensure that the voices of graduate students and the services they need are best situated to continue into the future in a more stable way,” Howe said. “This is an outstanding proposal that causes no problems and fixes a number of problems, and ensures only good things happen, and that a lot of those good things happen even better than they are currently happening.”

While it makes sense for Howe to support a proposal that gives GPC increased representative power over graduate students and a larger budget, Senff is just as supportive of the dissolution of GSA.

“[GSA] gets all of the good coming over to GPC, and we’re eliminating some of the problems that really do have material impacts on the abilities of the organizations to serve graduate students in a timely and robust manner,” Senff said.

But there have been questions raised on whether this is a beneficial proposal for both organizations. Some are concerned with the fact that the proposal was made behind closed doors.

“My concern comes from the process itself,” said Myunghee Lee, a graduate student with no affiliations with either organization. “I am very suspicious because I do not see any transparent information sharing and discussion processes. I do not see any efforts to persuade or compromise. I only see hasty conclusions and voting decisions.”

Katherine Perry, former GSA president and the most prominent voice against the proposal, is concerned with the backgrounds of Senff and GSA Secretary Eric Scott in Coalition of Graduate Workers, who created this proposal.

“How does someone become president of an organization that they have never been involved with, never been a board member, and then inside of two months of becoming a leader, start

drafting a dissolution of that organization without having spent the time to understand the organization?” Perry said.

Although last year GSA stated that it remained neutral to any political stances, [GPC has aligned itself with the Coalition of Graduate Workers](#).

While she has no current positions in CGW, Senff was the most recent chair of the Coalition of Graduate Workers. Scott is the current co-chair of CGW and the liaison of CGW and GPC. It is unclear on whether the GSA board members still remain separate from the union.

“There are some very interesting coincidences and connections between them,” Perry said. “CGW benefits by having one organization that supports it because they can say they have the support of all the graduate students.”

If this proposal were to pass, GPC would be the only central representative graduate student organization, so the only organization available for graduate and professional students to turn to would be a political organization.

GPC and current GSA board members argue that having one graduate/professional organization will benefit graduate students because it would clear up any current confusion of which organization to contact.

“Confusion sounds like this sort of minor concern, like confusion is just an annoyance, but when you’re trying to get an email to someone because something has happened with your funding, or you have a really big problem in your department that you need an answer to or there’s just something,” Senff said. “Graduate students live on such narrow margins of time and emotional resources and money that every little bit matters.”

But Senff also said that much of the confusion is only anecdotal and there is no public evidence of this confusion. Former GSA president Kenneth Bryant Jr. said he worked to clean up the confusion during his two-year presidency.

“Because we successfully rebranded [GSA], I was under the impression that everyone was clear on its stated mission,” Bryant said. “That individuals — particularly those who represent GPC — continue to express confusion about the differences between GSA and GPC, leads me to believe that there has been no concerted effort on the part of GPC leadership to clarify those differences with its membership.”

Perry said having only one organization makes the graduate student representation less diverse, especially, Perry argues, when graduate students haven’t been represented very well across the UM System in the past.

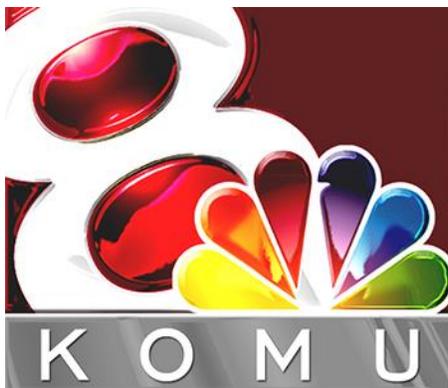
“By consolidating into GPC ... you have said to them that this is the one organization that you can go to for all of your concerns, these are the only people that you can ask things from. If you don’t agree with their agenda, there is very little you can do about it,” Perry said.

The proposal timeline originally called for GPC to vote at its general assembly meeting on Nov. 7 and the GSA to vote in its general assembly meeting on Nov. 28.

This timeline was set in conjunction to the Student Fee Review Council’s deadline for organization budget proposals. The budget recommendation was originally going to be sent in December, but Howe said the SFRC chair has agreed to push back the deadline until winter break.

The GPC general assembly voted Tuesday to push further discussion of the proposal until the next general assembly meeting in December.

There will be a town hall meeting hosted by the boards of GSA and GPC on Nov. 15 from 6-8 p.m. in the Arvarh E. Strickland Room, S203 Memorial Union.



[Students fast to raise awareness for human trafficking](#)

By: Adam Duxter

Watch the story: <http://www.komu.com/news/students-fast-to-raise-awareness-for-human-trafficking>

COLUMBIA - A group of MU students were taking food off the table Tuesday, in part of a national fast to raise awareness for human trafficking.

Over 100 groups across the country were taking part in the fast, created by the International Justice Mission, or IJM.

Students partaking in the fast said that human trafficking isn't just an international issue.

"A lot of people think that human trafficking is something that's happening in third world countries around the world, which is true, but it's also happening right here in Columbia, Kansas City, Saint Louis, pretty much everywhere," said Courtney Yerganian, who is part of MU's IJM chapter.

According to the International Justice Mission's website, more than 40 million people are currently enslaved around the globe.

Karen Mickey, who works with the Central Missouri Stop Human Trafficking Coalition, said events like the student fast are important to spread the news about trafficking in America.

"The fact that students in their twenties are more concerned about caring for other people than they are about going out and partying says volumes for the future of our country and our town," she said.

the maneater

MU program strives to help improve communication for those with aphasia

By LAUREN CLERC

Earlier this semester, the MU School of Health Professions founded the Language Enhancement for Adults Program, a clinical program that focuses on patients diagnosed with aphasia.

Aphasia is an acquired communication disorder resulting from trauma to the brain that impairs communication and understanding. Gwen Nolan, the coordinator of LEAP, said victims of aphasia typically will have suffered a stroke, brain injury or neurological disease.

"From what I've seen, I think that aphasia can have implications for all aspects of life," Nolan said. "As far as communication goes, it can be really isolating because you have a hard time conveying your message as well as understanding messages that are coming in too. It can really impact confidence with communicating in social situations and speaking out to others."

Despite limitations, LEAP strives to better the communication skills of its participants through both one-on-one therapy with communication science and disorders graduate students each week and group activities once a month.

As LEAP is a training program, Nolan said it has a dual mission of increasing communication confidence in participants while also training and educating graduate students to provide therapy and social communication opportunities. Currently, there are four graduate students involved who work with four clients.

Every Friday, the clients meet with graduate students for individual therapy. The overarching goal of the therapy is to engage in activities stimulating conversation in a variety of contexts, whether that be through functional practices or games.

Claire Custer, an MU graduate student involved with LEAP, said she spends time with her client doing activities such as listening to phone messages, using strategies to improve memory and completing functional activities useful in everyday life. During group activities, they also play games.

Aside from weekly meetings, there are participant-driven group activities once a month. For the first group activity in October, participants chose to have breakfast at Cracker Barrel. Social speech was utilized when ordering from the menu and talking with the waiter. For November's activity, there was a LEAP casino night at Lewis Hall in which clients and graduate students played card games such as blackjack, betting with candy.

LEAP enables participants to increase the practice of communication in a variety of contexts, and though the program hasn't been around for very long, its impact on clients is already evident, Nolan said.

"The friendships between the guys has been really cool to see," Custer said. "I think it can be a really isolating thing when you can't communicate as well. For all of them to have that community and that support of other people to kind of understand what they're going through has been [beneficial]."

Beyond those newfound bonds, Nolan said spouses of the participants have reported increased communication attempts outside of the program. However, they will determine concrete results later on.

"At the beginning, I had all the participants rate their communication confidence and competence," Nolan said. "I also had the students rate it. We'll do that again at the end of the semester and see where we're at."

The group activity for the first Friday of December has already been planned, with clients having opted to host a pizza party accompanied by a white elephant gift exchange. Beyond this semester, Nolan said she hopes to expand the program to include more students and members of the community and remains excited about LEAP.

"It was always a dream of mine to start a program like this so that students could experience more functional types of therapy similar to what they would see in the field so they could learn

how to work with people who have both chronic and acute cognitive and language disorders,” Nolan said.



[MU research farms help farmers from Myanmar](#)

By: Finley Walker

Watch the story: <http://www.komu.com/news/mu-research-farms-help-farmers-from-myanmar>

COLUMBIA - 50-year-old Agnes Ngun Cer Thluai farms around 2.5 acres of land to feed her family. She is from the Zathlir village in the Chin State of Myanmar. She recently visited farmers at MU's southern research farm.

She doesn't understand a word of English. She watched farmers hands as they explain how their operations process and store seed.

Dominic S. Thla Ceu, however, speaks many languages. He works for an organization called Karuna Mission for Social Solidarity, where he is the project coordinator for the Productive Agriculture through Community Engagement project.

The two were able to come to the United States to learn more about farming sustainability through a program run by Foods Resource Bank, an organization that raises money to help people in developing countries grow food more efficiently.

Associate Regional Manager Rachel Brink said the the group follows the philosophy "if you give a man a fish, he eats for the day. If you teach a man to fish, he eats for life."

"If you really want to see lasting change, people have to be able to do them for themselves," Brink said. "If people help themselves, it lasts for a lifetime. People are able to grow their own food and have the dignity of feeding themselves."

Agnes and Dominic will visit farms in six different states to learn more about producing and storing corn mostly.

"The terrain is very mountainous in the Chin State, the region they're from, so they produce a lot of corn," Brink said. "This program will not only teach them better ways to grow corn, but how to store it as well, they lose a lot of their supply in their storage process."

Dominic said he hopes the information he picks up here will help expand his knowledge. He said he is interested in social entrepreneurship and development works, especially farmers, the poor, and marginalized people in his state.

"It is a good learn for me that I can bring back to my country," Dominic said. "And also continue learning about this process."