

## Prop B foe says proposed tax hike was too steep

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A day after Missouri voters barely rejected a sharp increase in the state's tobacco tax for the third time in a decade, educators are wondering where they can find increased school funding and supporters of the tax hike are trying to figure out where they could have found more people to back the cause.

Proposition B, which would have raised the excise tax on tobacco from 17 cents per pack \_ the lowest rate in the nation \_ to 90 cents, failed by less than 1 percent out of more than 2.6 million votes cast Tuesday. In 2002 and 2006, voters rejected similar measures by less than 2 percentage points.

The state auditor's office estimated the initiative would have generated between \$283 million and \$423 million annually, with the proceeds to be earmarked for education and smoking cessation efforts.

The measure had the backing of K-12 educators and those in higher education because of the money involved, while the American Cancer Society pushed for the tax increase as a deterrent to young people thinking about picking up the smoking habit.

"It was the most important thing on the ballot, more important than any statewide candidate, for the well-being of both the kids in Missouri and our economic development," said proposal sponsor Rep. Chris Kelly, a Columbia Democrat.

Ron Leone, head of the Missouri Petroleum Marketers and Convenience Store Association, Proposition B's most prominent opponent, said the tax was far too steep and would have cost Missouri its competitive advantage in the cigarette market. **A study by a University of Missouri economics professor estimated the state would more than \$67 million in sales tax revenue because of an estimated drop in sales of about 157 million packs.**

Leone said he could support possibly doubling the tobacco tax to 33 or 34 cents, which would keep Missouri's tax lower than in surrounding states.

**A week ago, University of Missouri's Columbia campus Chancellor Brady Deaton warned that failure to pass the tax increase would likely scuttle plans to expand its medical school with a second clinical campus in Springfield.**

On Wednesday, a university spokeswoman repeated that assertion.

**"We are disappointed Proposition B did not pass, and there is no other source of funding to expand the medical school in Springfield," said Mary Jo Banken, director of the university's news bureau.**

Kelly praised the efforts of Leone's group while criticizing educators outside of Boone County for not doing enough to get the measure passed \_ especially in rural areas and college towns such as Warrensburg, home of the University of Central Missouri.

"Except in Boone County, school people didn't seem to care," he said.

Brent Ghan, spokesman for the Missouri School Boards' Association, said K-12 educators fought hard for the tax increase, including passing resolutions in support of it.

But questions raised by opponents about where the new tobacco revenue would be spent were valid, he said, in light of previous instances in which gambling proceeds were promised for education, only to replace \_ not supplement \_ state funding for schools.

"Skepticism of government in general probably came into play in the vote," Ghan said.

## Third time hardly charming for boosters of higher Mo. tobacco taxes

8 hours ago • [By Tim O'Neil toneil@post-dispatch.com314-340-8132](mailto:By Tim O'Neil toneil@post-dispatch.com314-340-8132)

### MU MENTION P. 2

The pattern is almost becoming habit-forming.

For the third time in 11 years, Missouri voters were asked to raise tobacco taxes. And for the third time, they narrowly rejected it.

Tuesday's vote was 50.8 percent against, a difference of only 42,581 votes among nearly 2.7 million cast.

In 2002, the vote was 51 percent against. In 2006, it was 52 percent.

"They've all been squeakers," said Ron Leone of the Missouri Petroleum Marketers and Convenience Store Association, the main opposition group.

Leone said his association will discuss a "reasonable compromise" with the American Cancer Society and other groups to raise state tobacco taxes. "Maybe after a third time they will come to the table," he said.

Missouri's cigarette tax of 17 cents per pack is the lowest in the nation. Proposition B, the proposal on Tuesday's ballot, would have raised it to 90 cents, still below the national average of \$1.49 per pack.

Leone declined to specify an acceptable increase, saying the association wanted to remain competitive along Missouri's border with eight states, where taxes range from 60 cents per pack in Kentucky to \$1.98 in Illinois. He said the association once endorsed an increase to 33 cents and acknowledged, "This issue isn't going to go away."

A spokeswoman for Proposition B said the American Cancer Society and others haven't decided how to proceed, including whether to make another effort on the ballot. In a written statement, Proposition B campaign chief Misty Snodgrass said Wednesday, "Now it will be up to our state legislature to find an alternative way" to reduce smoking and improve health.

Her statement also said, "This is a sad day for Missouri. While we respect the will of voters, we do not respect the last-ditch scare tactics tobacco companies used to confuse voters..."

Responded Leone, "I'm a little surprised by the sour grapes."

The association campaigned with television advertising, telephone calls and anti-proposition signs plastered on service stations and convenience stores throughout the state, calling Proposition B an outrageous tax increase. None of it mentioned cigarettes or tobacco.

He said the state's network of retailers "gives us a strong platform to communicate with voters." He said tobacco products account for about one-fourth of sales at convenience stores.

Leone said he welcomed support from Missouri Right to Life, the Missouri Family Network and the Missouri Farm Bureau, all of which opposed Proposition B "and were extraordinarily helpful in alerting their members."

**As in 2002 and 2006, the strongest support for Proposition B came from urban areas, and the least was in rural counties. It received almost 60 percent support in St. Louis city and county. It also passed in St. Charles County; Kansas City and adjoining counties; Greene County (Springfield), and in three college-town counties, Boone (University of Missouri Columbia), Adair (Truman State University) and Nodaway (Northwest Missouri State University).**

It trailed everywhere else, and many rural counties were more than 2-1 against. Jefferson and Franklin counties were almost 60 percent opposed.



## Tobacco tax hike defeated

### MU facilities plan is placed on hold.

By Janese Silvey

Wednesday, November 7, 2012

**The University of Missouri will put plans to expand medical facilities on hold after Missourians yesterday rejected a proposed tobacco tax increase.**

"We have no revenues to pursue that," Chancellor Brady Deaton said this morning. "That was contingent on getting external funding."

Statewide, 50.8 percent of voters said "no" and 49.2 percent said "yes" to Proposition B, which would have raised state taxes on a pack of smokes by 73 cents.

The proposed statute said profits from the tax should be divvied up among K-12 schools, universities and smoking cessation programs.

MU had hoped to use the money to increase the size of incoming medical school classes and to expand a clinical partnership with hospitals in Springfield. It's possible the university or state could find other revenue to fund that plan, Deaton said.

Steven Dickherber, executive chief of staff with the Missouri Students Association, said he thinks voters might not have realized the benefits of the increase.

"I know Missouri is kind of an anti-tax state, and this reaffirms that," he said. "It's one of those things I think if people only knew what this was going to do for higher education."

This is the third time voters have rejected a ballot attempt to raise taxes on cigarettes.

Ron Leone, a lobbyist for the Missouri Petroleum Marketers & Convenience Store Association, said he thinks voters recognized it was an "outrageous" increase with no guarantee how profits would be spent.

"We're not surprised, but we are grateful, and we're thrilled," Leone said. "We said from the beginning, if you give common-sense Missourians the facts, they'll make the right decision every time."

Although drafters of the proposal tried to build in safeguards, they acknowledged there were no guarantees that future lawmakers would continue to pump the money into schools and colleges.

Rep. Chris Kelly, D-Columbia, said he's proud of the nearly 60 percent of Boone County voters who supported the plan.

"I am disappointed," he said of the total. "We're killing our statewide economic development by the condition of our rural schools. This was a chance to change that."

In other ballot measures:

- Voters passed a proposition that gives the city of St. Louis control of its police force for the first time since 1861. Currently, a five-person board consisting of the St. Louis mayor and four members appointed by the governor oversee the department. The ballot initiative would allow the city to take over the administration of the department beginning in July.
- Voters passed Proposition E, which bans the governor or his administration from taking steps to create an online insurance exchange. Under President Barack Obama's health care law, states have until 2014 to create a health insurance exchange or have the federal government run one for them.

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## Missouri schools miss out on new funds with tobacco tax loss

Backers of Missouri's Proposition B are looking at ways their campaign faltered.

By BILL DRAPER

A day after Missouri voters barely rejected a sharp increase in the state's tobacco tax for the third time in a decade, educators are wondering where they can find increased school funding.

Supporters of the tax hike are trying to figure out where they could have found more people to back the cause.

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# COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

## MU medical program expansion to resume original plan for funding

**COLUMBIA – Now that voters have rejected Proposition B, a fundraising plan to expand the MU School of Medicine will go back to its roots.**

Through a tax on tobacco, some of the revenue raised by Proposition B would have helped cover a \$43 million price tag to create a clinical campus program in Springfield in partnership with the CoxHealth and Mercy health systems. The project also includes construction of a related medical education building at MU.

Now, representatives from the MU School of Medicine and the CoxHealth and Mercy health systems will re-emphasize an approach they've been using for the past two years: telling legislators and the public about the plans.

"We're basically going to continue where we left off," said Rich Gleba, director of communications for the School of Medicine. "The next step will be to continue with legislators beginning with the next legislative session. Once funding is secured, it will take two years for construction of the building in Columbia and to enroll our first class of students in the expanded program."

The building would cost \$30 million, and the annual operating cost would be \$10 million, Gleba said. The remaining \$3 million would go to renovate facilities in Springfield to create education space.

The longterm point of the project is to increase the number of doctors in Missouri; one aspect of that is to increase the number of doctors in rural areas. Through this project, that would be done by increasing MU's medical class size by nearly 30 percent, up from 96 students per class to 128, according to documents presented to the UM Board of Curators in September.

This increase would address the shortage of physicians in Missouri, according to an economic impact study prepared by Thomas Johnson.

The program created in Springfield would be aimed at students who want to do their residencies and practice in rural areas of Missouri.

Les Hall, interim dean of the MU School of Medicine, said in a statement Wednesday that when the plan to increase medical student class size and create a clinical campus was designed, the intention was to seek other sources of private and public funding.

"We will continue to pursue funding for our plan to meet Missouri's need for more physicians," Hall said.

Talking up the project was the main way to try to acquire funding for it. When Proposition B came up, it provided another possible way to raise money, Gleba said.

The proposition would have taxed \$0.0365 per cigarette, 25 percent of the manufacturer's invoice price for roll-your-own tobacco and 15 percent for other tobacco products. Part of the revenue would have gone to public colleges and universities.

Weldon Webb, associate dean of the MU School of Medicine, told the Missourian in September that the tax revenue would have covered a majority of the cost of expanding class size and starting the new clinical campus.

As it has for the past two years, the timeline for the project depends on when funding is available.

"While Proposition B provided a potential opportunity to expand at MU and create a clinical campus, it never relied on that passage entirely," Gleba said. "It was just one potential source of funding that presented itself. It will just take us longer to secure the funding."

*Supervising editor is Elizabeth Brixey.*

## Imagine yourself thin! How having a slim alter-ego online could help you lose weight

Fans of virtual reality games are often stereotyped as geeky introverts.

But scientists say having an electronic doppelganger could actually improve a person's health and appearance.

**Harnessing the power of the virtual world could even lead to new forms of obesity treatment, according to the team from the University of Missouri.**

In a recent study they found that people who most strongly identified with their online persona, or avatar, the more it could influence their behaviour in real life.

'The creation of an avatar allows an individual to try on a new appearance and persona, with little risk or effort,' research leader Elizabeth Behm-Morawitz, said.

'That alter-ego can then have a positive influence on a person's life. For example, people seeking to lose weight could create fitter avatars to help visualize themselves as slimmer and healthier.'

In the study, 279 users of a virtual reality community, Second Life, answered a questionnaire about their engagement with their avatar and relationships they developed online, as well as their offline health, appearance and emotional well-being.

Self-presence, or the degree to which users experienced their avatars as an extension of themselves, was found to predict the influence of the avatar on people's physical reality.

A strong sense of self-presence in the social virtual world positively promoted health and well-being of study participants.

People with high degrees of self-presence in the cyber world reported that their experience with their avatar improved how they felt about themselves offline. Self-presence also correlated to greater satisfaction with online relationships.

'This study found no evidence of negative effects of a high degree of self-presence in the virtual world on study participants; however, that doesn't rule out the possibility,' said Behm-Morawitz.

'Users should practice moderation. Virtual entertainment, like other forms of diversion such as books or television, can be used in unhealthy ways.'

Further research by Behm-Morawitz on virtual worlds will look at how avatars may be used to encourage tolerance of diversity. A person's race, gender or ethnicity can be altered in the virtual reality world and they can be put into simulated situations where they suffer prejudice and discrimination.

Avatars can create the modern version of the book *Black Like Me*, in which the Caucasian author darkened his skin to experience life as an African-American in the Deep South of the 1950s.

'I am also interested in studying how using an avatar with a different race or ethnicity may increase empathy and decrease prejudice,' said Behm-Morawitz.

'This may occur through the process of identification with an avatar that is different from oneself, or through a virtual simulation that allows individuals to experience discrimination as a member of a non-dominant group might experience it.'

The study was published in the journal *Computers in Human Behavior*.

# theman eater

## Civic Leaders Internship Program to offer student scholarships

Nearly 300 students from almost all majors have participated in full- or part-time internships in government offices, government agencies and the state legislature with the help of the Civic Leaders Internship Program, according to the program's website.

The program has been offered for 13 years, but CLIP recently announced it has received funding from Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education Jim Spain, which will provide scholarships for about 50 students.

The funding will ensure that all of the students who want to participate in this program and learn about their government have the ability to balance the extra costs it entails, such as daily transportation to Jefferson City, Office of Service Learning director Anne-Marie Foley said.

For full-time interns, 15 to 20 \$2,000 scholarships will be available, and about 30 smaller stipends will be available for part-time interns.

"The goals of the program are to serve the state of Missouri and to provide a positive educational program for students," Foley said. "The internships help (students) discover skills and abilities they have to help them contribute to the public good, as well as see how their government works."

To apply for the program, students first attend a workshop where they find out how the program works. They then submit applications and their transcripts and go through interviews. Finally, they are placed in their respective internships, Foley said. Due to the new additional funding, applications for the program will continue to be accepted for the next few weeks.

"We want (applicants) to be solid students at the university with an interest in community service and serving the state," Foley said. "Our program is said to be competitive, but you've probably already competed if you meet our profile."

Once placed in an internship, interns have a variety of different responsibilities.

"Generally most interns (do) a lot of work tracking legislation, taking notes at committee meetings and caring for their official's constituents," said junior Ethan Todd, who interned for Lt. Gov. Peter Kinder last spring. "I had a fantastic experience in my office and was able to focus in on tasks that I had personal interest in."

Todd said he recommends CLIP without hesitation.

"I think the CLIP program does an excellent job in providing a hands-on internship that fosters professional growth," said senior Valerie Speck, who participated in the CLIP program during the Spring 2011 semester. "The CLIP program offered me a reputable internship with the state government,

incredible opportunities and experiences with legislators and lobbyists that I could not have gotten elsewhere, and real skills that I could transfer to other jobs.”

Speck interned for Rep. Mike Colona, D-Mo.

“There is such a variety in the work you do in the CLIP program,” Speck said. “No two days at the Capitol are the same, I promise.”

After her CLIP experience, Speck worked as an editorial intern for Hallmark Cards last summer.

Speck said she applied many skills she used and learned during her CLIP internship when at Hallmark. She said she developed more of an interest in politics and highly recommends the program to students of all disciplines.

“Not only will you gain real-world job experience,” Speck said. “You will develop an understanding of politics that you simply cannot get anywhere else.”

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## Nixon likely to continue education policies in second term

### MU Mention page 2

Gov. Jay Nixon, D-Mo., was re-elected as Missouri's governor over Republican candidate Dave Spence Tuesday.

It is the first time a Missouri governor has been re-elected since Mel Carnahan was re-elected in 1996.

Nixon's re-election introduces more continuity in the office and will not bring about any significant policy changes, MU political science professor William Horner said.

"He has been a moderate to conservative governor so far, and so I don't think you're going to see much change in that," Horner said. "Now I suppose the legislature would disagree with that assessment, but he really has been a pretty moderate governor."

Mizzou College Democrats Treasurer Bo Mahr said Nixon's re-election would be beneficial for students. He said Nixon has benefited students by preventing tuition increases, allowing more transfer credits and increasing A+ Scholarship Programs.

"I think (Nixon's re-election) will send a pretty clear message of what he has done the past several years," Mahr said. "And that is he has been on the side of students, really. When the recession hit, he froze our tuition. He has done a lot for students in the realm of providing more transfer credits so that a junior college will then transfer into a university, which makes education a lot more accessible for those who don't have as much money."

Horner also addressed the governor's actions to prevent tuition increases.

"In terms of impact on the university, he has taken a pretty aggressive stand against the university at times," Horner said. "I don't know if we will continue to see that, but he has been pretty hard-line about tuition increases and that sort of thing. That's good from the student perspective, I suppose."

State Sen. Kurt Schaefer, R-District 19, who was also re-elected Tuesday, said he will continue as appropriations chairman and will work closely with the governor. He previously fought against Nixon's proposed \$106 million cut in education funding.

"The governor proposed a \$106 million cut at the beginning of the budget in 2013," Schaefer said. "We were able, in the legislature, to come up with money to avoid the cut and ultimately the governor agreed with us."

The gubernatorial election is the most important election for MU students, said State Rep. Caleb Jones, R.-District 117. It is important to have a governor who supports higher education and an educated

workforce for potential employers that move to the state, but he said Nixon has cut more than \$23 million from the school since he has been in office.

Homer Page, chairman of the Boone Country Democrats Central Committee, said he thinks Nixon has done well to support higher education.

**“I think that Gov. Nixon has done a great job of supporting higher education, especially at the University of Missouri,” Page said. “I think this case will bring a balanced approach to funding education across the state.”**

The economy was another key point in the campaign between Nixon and Spence.

“I think it is interesting that Dave Spence centered a lot of his campaign around the economy and jobs,” Mizzou College Democrats chairman Tyler Hays said. “But, if you just look at the numbers of Missouri and what we have done recently with Gov. Nixon at the helm, Nixon has basically turned the state around in a very big way.”

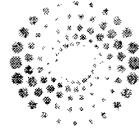
Page also said he thinks Nixon will improve Missouri’s economy. He said Nixon will encourage job growth and will be able to utilize his veto power to force the Republican legislature to work with him on the economical issues most important to Missourians.

“He will continue to push the budget and be fiscally sound,” Page said. “He will create a climate (that) businesses will want to come to and jobs will be created. We will continue to move forward as a state as we have in the last few years. That’s what I see from Gov. Nixon in his second term.”

Governors are, in a lot of ways, captive to what the national economy is doing, Horner said.

“I think when governors or gubernatorial candidates make claims about generating jobs, they’re overstating reality a great deal,” Horner said.

# Chicago Tribune



# REUTERS

## Crop insurance a post-election target, farm bill elusive

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - Federally subsidized crop insurance will be a big target for lawmakers looking to cut the budget deficit in the lame-duck session of Congress opening next week, agricultural policy experts agreed the morning after a status-quo general election.

But lawmakers will probably be unable to break their deadlock over enacting a five-year, \$500 billion farm bill covering a wide range of agricultural policy from food stamps to crop subsidies and soil conservation.

The worst drought to hit the Midwest farm belt in half a century should double the cost of crop insurance this year, and the nagging drought threatens 2013 crops as well.

Another key question for farm policy watchers after the re-election of President Barack Obama is whether Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack will serve a second term. Since the 1960s, only one USDA secretary has served two terms.

Ethanol likely benefited from Obama's victory, said analyst Mark McMinimy of Guggenheim Securities, noting that Obama and Vilsack are biofuels backers.

The Environmental Protection Agency may decide this month whether to relax the requirement to use ethanol in gasoline. Livestock producers say they are being ruined by high grain prices as more U.S. crops are diverted to fuel.

With Democrats still in narrow control of the Senate and Republicans keeping their majority in the House, analysts said a short-term extension of the 2008 farm law, probably into spring, was the likely outcome.

### ODDS AGAINST FIVE-YEAR FARM BILL

**"Odds are against a five-year farm bill in the lame duck (session) unless it's part of a budget agreement," and a budget deal is also unlikely, said Pat Westhoff of the think tank Food and Agricultural Policy Research, based at the University of Missouri.**

Crop insurance already is the biggest part of the farm safety net, costing the government around \$7 billion a year. The cost was expected to jump to \$15 billion or more this year because the

government will shoulder most of the underwriting losses for the 16 insurance companies in the field.

The full cost of the drought indemnities will be revealed during Congress' post-election session, which could direct more attention to crop insurance. So far, farmers have collected \$3.6 billion in indemnities that ultimately could hit \$25 billion.

Senators voted overwhelmingly in June to reduce the federal insurance subsidy for the wealthiest farmers. This could save \$1.1 billion over a decade. The House of Representatives has not yet decided on this issue.

Costs could be cut further through an across-the-board reduction in the premium subsidy - currently the government pays 62 cents of each \$1 in premiums - or by requiring insurers to accept a larger share of losses.

#### WHY ATTACK CROP INSURANCE? ASK FARM GROUPS

The major U.S. farm groups made a strong crop insurance program their top priority for the bill, even if it meant cutting other agricultural supports.

"Why start attacking the one tool we've been guiding people toward for 25 years?" asked Dale Moore, a lobbyist for the 6 million-member American Farm Bureau Federation.

The House splintered over how deeply to cut crop subsidies, many of which go to well-off farmers, and food stamps that are a lifeline for millions of low-income Americans.

House Republican leaders refused to call a vote on the bill during the summer, saying there was not a majority for it. Majority Leader Eric Cantor says he will bring the issue to the floor during the lame duck session.

The House Agriculture Committee's farm bill would slash \$16 billion from the food stamp budget over 10 years, the largest cuts in a generation and four times larger than those proposed by the Senate.

Barry Flinchbaugh, Kansas State University agricultural economist, said he does not expect a new farm bill until April. The final version probably will look like the Senate bill, Flinchbaugh told a bankers' meeting in Milwaukee this week.

It would end traditional crop subsidies, mainstays of U.S. farm law for eight decades, and instead compensate farmers when revenue from a crop was 11 to 21 percent below normal. Crop

insurance would cover deeper losses. The leading House plan would also boost crop support prices by up to 40 percent.

#### VILSACK TO STAND DOWN OR STAY?

Farmers, in general, are not Obama fans. The president's share of the rural vote dropped to 41 percent on Tuesday from 46 percent in the 2008 election, according to the Center for Rural Strategies.

But Vilsack, Obama's agriculture secretary and a former Iowa governor, has been a mostly popular USDA chief with a strong focus on overseeing programs as diverse as nutrition, farm exports and the national forest system.

Vilsack "is widely expected to continue" at USDA, said Guggenheim analyst McMinimy. Some USDA insiders expect Vilsack will stay for another year or two, a farm lobbyist said.

Potential successors could include former Senate Agriculture Committee chair Blanche Lincoln and Deputy Secretary Kathleen Merrigan, say farm activists.

Michigan Senator Debbie Stabenow, elected to her third term on Tuesday, was expected to return as chair of the Senate Agriculture Committee. Oklahoma Republican Frank Lucas, elected to his 11th term, will likely be back as House Agriculture Committee chairman. Each was the lead author of the farm bills passed by their committees this year.

## Rape remark defined Akin's campaign, McCaskill win

17 hours ago • Associated Press

Missouri congressman Todd Akin called it his "six-second mistake." As it turns out, his remark about "legitimate rape" was more than enough to sink his U.S. Senate campaign.

Democrat Sen. Claire McCaskill notched a resounding victory over her Republican challenger in Tuesday's election, achieving the largest winning margin for a Missouri Senate race in 18 years despite entering the 2012 campaign as a self-described underdog.

In hindsight, however, the outcome seemed almost inevitable.

From the moment Akin won the Republican primary \_ even before then, in fact \_ McCaskill had been framing a race in which she would appear reasonable and her opponent extreme. She ran an effective advertising campaign financed by a considerable cash advantage over Akin. And she combined it with a door-knocking, phone-calling blitz that McCaskill says reached millions of homes.

"I honestly believe that if it hadn't been for that comment, there would have been another," McCaskill said in a post-election interview with The Associated Press. "Yes, the comment on 'legitimate rape' dominated, but had he not said that, there was a lot of other material to work with."

McCaskill's strategy to portray Akin as extreme was successful because she could cite the "legitimate rape" remark as the topper in a series of statements and positions taken by Akin. She highlighted his opposition to federally issued student loans, airing video of Akin describing how the loan program was an example of the government's "stage three cancer of socialism." Then, too, there was Akin's opposition to the federal's government's role in setting the minimum wage, funding the school lunch program and establishing a national sex offender registry. McCaskill's campaign distributed a daily count-down email entitled: "35 Days, 35 Ways Todd Akin is Too Extreme for Missouri."

Akin countered that it was McCaskill who was too extreme for Missouri, particularly citing her support for President Barack Obama's 2009 stimulus act and 2010 health care law \_ the latter of which had been symbolically rejected by Missourians in a 2010 ballot measure. But Akin's message appeared to get drowned out by the reverberation from his own words.

During an interview taped Aug. 17 at St. Louis television station KTVI, Akin was asked whether abortion should be legal for women who have been raped.

"From what I understand from doctors, that's really rare," Akin said, referring to pregnancy in rapes. "If it's a legitimate rape, the female body has ways to try to shut that whole thing down."

The next day, Akin joined the rest of Missouri's Republican ticket for statewide offices on a campaign swing to southwest Missouri, never anticipating the firestorm to come when the interview aired on Aug. 19. Social media sites quickly lit up with chatter. Soon Akin was being denounced and ridiculed nationwide. Top Republicans, including GOP presidential nominee Mitt Romney, urged him to quit the race. And millions of dollars of planned advertising evaporated almost overnight from deep-pocketed groups that typically back Republicans.

"Akin was ahead when he was more of a theoretical candidate, right after the primary," said Dave Robertson, a political science professor at the University of Missouri-St. Louis. "He became virtually toxic after the legitimate rape comment. ...

"It was the first thing Missouri voters knew about Akin, and it was something they didn't like," Robertson added.

An exit poll conducted for the AP showed many voters were turned off by Akin's remark. Nearly two-thirds of voters said that, at the very least, they gave the comment some consideration in the voting booth \_ and those who did overwhelmingly sided with McCaskill by a rate of almost three to one. Close to 70 percent of women said Akin's remark about rape and abortion was important to their decision, and Akin couldn't get the majority of men to look past that race-turning moment, either.

"The man is not even in reality," state worker Cindy King said after casting a ballot for McCaskill in Jefferson City.

Akin repeatedly apologized for his remark and acknowledged he was wrong about rape victims having biological defenses against pregnancy. But McCaskill used the rape remark as a window into what she described as Akin's out-of-the-mainstream beliefs.

**"I think a lot of Missourians who were vaguely aware of him were probably surprised by just how conservative he was," said Peverill Squire, a political science professor at the University of Missouri-Columbia. "McCaskill might have been able to pull it out even if he had not had that one particular mistake, but that played right into her hands."**

Akin's remark may also have affected other Republican candidates. In some states, Democrats sought to link their Republican opponents to Akin. In Missouri, the other statewide GOP candidates generally kept a silent distance from Akin.

After conceding defeat to Democratic Gov. Jay Nixon, Republican gubernatorial challenger Dave Spence cited the media storm spawned by Akin's remarks "as one of the biggest influences on our race."

"There are only so many headlines in our state, and I think that race took all of them," Spence told the AP. As a result, Spence said, Nixon "was able to duck debates, not answer any questions and play hide and seek with Missouri voters."

In the closing days before the election, Spence packed most of the statewide GOP candidates into his RV for a cross-state campaign swing. Akin was not among them. The state Republican Party said Akin had been invited but chose to do his own thing. On election night, Missouri's prominent Republican candidates each held separate watch parties.

Akin has shied away from the media spotlight after his defeat \_ just as he did in the days immediately following his "legitimate rape" remark.

"Things don't always turn out the way you think they're going to," Akin said to his supporters while conceding defeat. "But I also think that in the circumstances we've all been through, that it's particularly appropriate to thank God, who makes no mistakes and who is much wiser than we are."