

Q&A with Nate Walker

District 3 state representative Nate Walker discusses his plans for the coming legislative session

BY SARAH-WONDER AGBEHIA, Staff Reporter

Q. What is the most important issue facing district 3 today?

A. Some of the things that I talked about during the campaign and I feel very strong about is if we have a good economy, people can be employed and get good jobs. That takes a lot of stress away from a family or a parent or someone who is trying to provide for their family. So the economy, I think, is tied to how to help make a better community for our families, and for parents and people who are trying to provide for and raise families. Making sure that we have an economy that provides good in the community is real important.

Q. What are your plans for improving the quality of life in district 3?

A. The quality of life in Kirksville and northern Missouri is pretty good, but we can always make sure we can keep it that way and do things to improve. Recently we had a very tragic situation where it appears that allegedly someone was murdered. This was a very terrible crime, and maybe mental health issues are related to that. So if there are people in the community that need mental health services, we want to make sure we have a community that is good that way.

We already have a very caring community. We have lots of churches, lots of organizations that spend a lot of time in community service so that is a very positive thing for our community.

Q. What is your vision for district 3 and how do you plan to actualize it?

A. We want to make sure that everyone who wants to work can get a job. We do everything we can to get jobs into Kirksville and into northern Missouri. Truman students are also affected by this, and we want to make sure that Truman stays a top-notch university with the good professors and good administration that we have already. Truman has received recent national and international recognition because



Submitted Photo

Top, District 3 state representative Nate Walker poses with his sons, Sam and Madison Walker, after being sworn in Jan. 9. Below, Walker, left, is sworn in to office with other members of the 97th General Assembly.

it is a great school, and I want to be part of that process by helping, for example, with state funding.

Dr. Paino has been talking [about] the funding process that is being considered in the legislature right now by a joint committee to be looking at a higher education funding formula and we want to make sure that that formula is implemented and doesn't do anything to impede or drastically hurt Truman State University or any of the universities in the state. We want to do everything possible to make all the colleges and universities in the state strong and also meeting the purpose that they are established for.

Q. You were appointed to several committees Jan. 10. What are those committees and what policies and bills can be expected in the future?

A. I was appointed to four com-

mittees: Higher Education, Agri-Business, Urban Issues, Workforce Development & Workforce Safety.

I felt very good about those committee appointments because first of all, higher education is a big priority in the third district. And Truman State University, A.T. Still, Moberly Area Community College, which has a campus here, and then all the various high schools and public schools throughout the district, this is a committee where I can have some impact on making sure we have good policies, good procedures for education, and I am really proud to be on that committee.

In order to make policies that benefit the people, we are going to deal with issues concerning the economy, issues in regard to energy, and we're going to be talking about education and making sure that there is good, affordable education in education, from preschool to college.

It was important to get on the Agri-Business committee because



that culture is a big economic boost in northern Missouri and one of the things I will work on is that I will continue to make and support policies that will not establish unnecessary rules and regulations and policies that will prohibit good agricultural practices and productions.

Being on the workforce committees will help with dealing with issues such as small businesses not being impeded from

expanding their employee bases and businesses. I also plan to make workers more viable in the 3rd district and represent them in a way that they need to be represented.

Also, I am aware of the issues facing Truman State University. One of our goals is to be able to create a legislature funding education, which will prevent nationally-ranked universities such as Truman from being attacked.



Ashley Jost/Index

Kelly's Furniture, located on North Baltimore Street, installed solar panels to power the store during the last few weeks. The solar panels currently are on the roof, but the final electrical work still is in the process of being completed.

Local furniture store installs solar panels

BY PAIGE YUNGERMANN
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Kelly's Furniture on North Baltimore is adding solar panels to save money and energy.

The 24 solar panels, upgrade to LED lighting and other electrical equipment necessary for the upgrade is part of a \$150,000 project that will be completed during the next week, Kelly's Furniture President Mark Krueger said.

After three to four years, Krueger said, this start-up cost will be paid for, and the solar panels essentially will provide free energy.

Once the project is complete, Krueger said the solar panels will provide about 25 kilowatts of energy, covering about 85 percent of the store's energy needs, the rest of which Ameren will provide.

The solar panels will provide energy for the store but not the company's warehouse. Krueger said the warehouse requires less energy than the store, and the start-up cost for adding solar panels to this building was not economically feasible.

Krueger said Kelly's Furniture has been considering alternative forms of energy for several years and decided during mid-October to install solar panels. He said solar panels were chosen because of the tax incentives, rebate incentives from Ameren and practicality.

Solar panels require almost no upkeep and are ideal for the sloped, south facing roof of Kelly's. Krueger said while wind energy also was considered, a large number of wind generators were required to provide enough energy for the store.

Kelly's Furniture worked with Missouri Solar Application to install the panels. Vaughn Prost, Missouri Solar Applications CEO, said Kelly's Furniture is the first business in Kirksville to install a major solar energy system.

Prost said Missouri Solar Applications installed a similar LED lighting and solar electric system for JC Mattress in Jefferson City last April. Store owner Dave Mehmert said installing this system saved his business over \$24,000 in energy costs the past year. He said another benefit is a solar system adds value to the building.

MoDOT increases Route 63 speed limit

BY DAN MIKA
Staff Reporter

The Missouri Department of Transportation increased the speed limit on portions of Route 63 between Boone County and Kirksville after implementing new safety measures to intersections.

The speed limit was raised from 65 to 70 mph during New Year's Day and is expected to make driving on the road more consistent, according to a press release from MoDOT, as Route 63 is 70 mph southbound from the Boone County line.

The section of Route 63 that experienced the change begins at the border of the Boone and Randolph counties and ends at Kirksville, according to a MoDOT press release.

MoDOT lowered the speed limit during 2011 due to a large number of crashes at the Atlanta, Cairo and Clark intersections to act on a road safety audit during November investigating solutions to a number of right-angle crashes.

Workers installed rumble strips, flashers for road signs and extra stop signs on both sides of the road at intersections that had a high number of collisions — including Atlanta, Cairo and Clark intersection — MoDOT area engineer Brian Haeffner said.

"Most of the more disabling or fatal crashes that we've seen are usually the result of cars pulling out from a side road in front of someone traveling on Route 63," Haeffner said.

MoDOT speed studies showed that drivers rarely were slowing down when crossing the Boone-Randolph County line, possibly because they were unaware of the speed limit change, traffic operations engineer Brian Untiedt said.

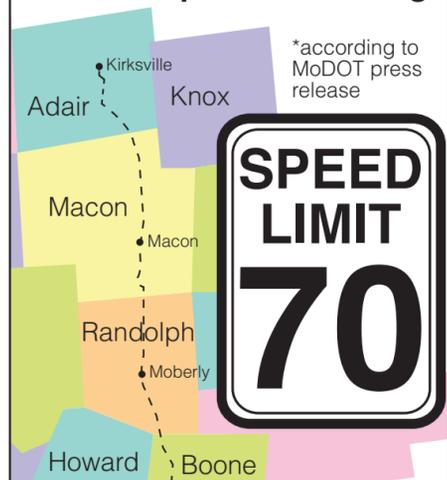
The speed limit increase also was in response to complaints from community members, Zach Wyatt, former District Two State Representative said. When an expansion from two lanes to four was proposed for Route 63, Wyatt said taxpayers were told they would be able to drive 70 mph from Kirksville to other major cities such as Columbia or Jefferson City.

"When MoDOT lowered [the limit] down then, I got a lot of angry calls and a lot of people that were mad about the issue," Wyatt said.

MoDOT lowered the speed limit to 65 mph during mid-2011 due to a number of incidents around La Plata and Atlanta, Wyatt said.

The speed limit change isn't expected to change how the route will be policed, according to Sgt.

Route 63 speed limit change



Brent Bernhardt, Public Information Officer for Missouri Highway Patrol Troop B. However, he said due to the new safety measures, he expects for there to be less crashes.

The Patrol will continue to enforce the posted speed limit on all roads and has no plans to increase patrols on the faster roadways, Bernhardt said. However, the Patrol will continue to promote driver safety and awareness on highways everywhere by enforcing standing laws and educating motorists.

"Traffic crashes are something that you can't predict," Bernhardt said. "So [the Missouri Highway Patrol] created a program called STOP."

The program, which stands for Stop, Think, Observe and Proceed, is a statewide initiative that began last spring and encourages drivers to yield the right-of-way or stop before entering the highway. The program places extra officers and uses police aircraft to monitor intersections with a high number of road incidents due to failure to yield.

"We use these resources to take enforcement action for those people that fail to yield the right of way or don't stop at those stop signs," Bernhardt said.

As of Jan. 13, no traffic collisions have occurred on Route 63, according to the Missouri Highway Patrol Crash Report.