

Op-Ed: Rep. Elik's July 2022 Legislative Update

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MADISON - This is my eleventh update to the citizens of the 111th district, as your State Representative. The summer has been busy with events, meetings and advocacy for constituents. Each day my office staff and I work on a wide variety of constituent services, policy issues, and pressing topics that affect peoples' lives and livelihoods. Therefore, the job is always engaging and interesting and there is never a dull moment. I'm often popping in and out of the office as I frequently go to meetings off-site. I love being able to meet with groups, businesses, and non-profits in their offices so that I'm out and about in the community as much as possible.

One memorable event I attended over the last couple of months was the Madison County Drug Court graduation. It is so inspiring to hear the difficult steps each graduate took to gain their lives and freedom back, and the impact it had on their entire family, especially those with children. The trajectory of the graduates' and their families' lives is now changed by their determination in this demanding program and our entire community can be proud of their success.

I was honored to speak at the Wood River Memorial Day ceremony, and walk in the Alton Memorial Day parade. I enjoyed being in town on Memorial Day this year since last year was a session day in Springfield. We held a beautiful ceremony on Independence Day weekend to name part of Highway 111 in South Roxana for Chief Todd Werner. I attended the groundbreaking for Madison County Transit's new administration building in Pontoon Beach and visited the National Great Rivers Research and Education Center to learn about river health, soil practices, and microplastics. My staff and I toured the Catholic Children's Home and heard about the loving care they provide for youth. I visited the Ameren Operations center and toured local gas and electric infrastructure projects.

I have spent much time this summer researching mental health needs and resources in our community and the state. I believe the state of Illinois currently does not have the capacity needed to ensure that people who need urgent mental health care, whether on an inpatient or outpatient basis, get timely care. We are so fortunate to have strong behavioral health organizations and facilities here in the 111th District, and the state should commit to improving capacity in all settings, including schools, and increasing the mental health workforce. I'm working to understand the most urgent needs, where we can make the most impactful changes, and where our tax dollars should go to be most effective. I know how important this is to families in our state and will continue this work.

In June I was invited to speak to the membership of the Tax Executive Institute of Chicago via Zoom about my experience as a Certified Public Accountant on the House Revenue & Finance committee and other financial committees. Corporate tax professionals from some of Illinois' large and medium sized businesses were represented on the Zoom, and we discussed recent Illinois changes that affect multi-state business sales and income taxes. I've been appointed to the new Comprehensive Licensing Information to Minimize Barriers task force, which will study where our state's professional licensing laws may be a barrier to access to certain professions.

I had a wonderful opportunity to attend the Emerging Legislative Leaders program this summer in Charlottesville, Virginia, led by faculty at the Darden Graduate School of Business. The program gathered fifty state legislators from all over the country to discuss the culture of contempt in American politics, ethical leadership, and coalition

building. A new term I learned in my readings and preparation for the program is “exhausted majority”, which describes the citizens that are not far right nor far left and are highly frustrated with the political climate and therefore prefer to avoid politics entirely. I gained valuable insight through this program and will use the lessons learned going forward.

While committee work has decreased since the end of the legislative session, we have had subject matter hearings on energy prices, transportation issues, and managed care organization billing problems for hospitals. The Public Safety and Violence Prevention Task Force will finally meet again this week after a long hiatus. It is rumored that we may be called in for a special session this fall regarding abortion and guns, but nothing is definite at this time.

While I haven't covered my entire schedule this summer, I wanted to give some highlights and let people know we are here for you all year round, not just during the spring legislative session. If we can help you navigate state government, please contact my office at 618-433-8046 or visit my website at RepElik.com.