



Toppmeyer: Why Mike Elko suits Texas A&M football

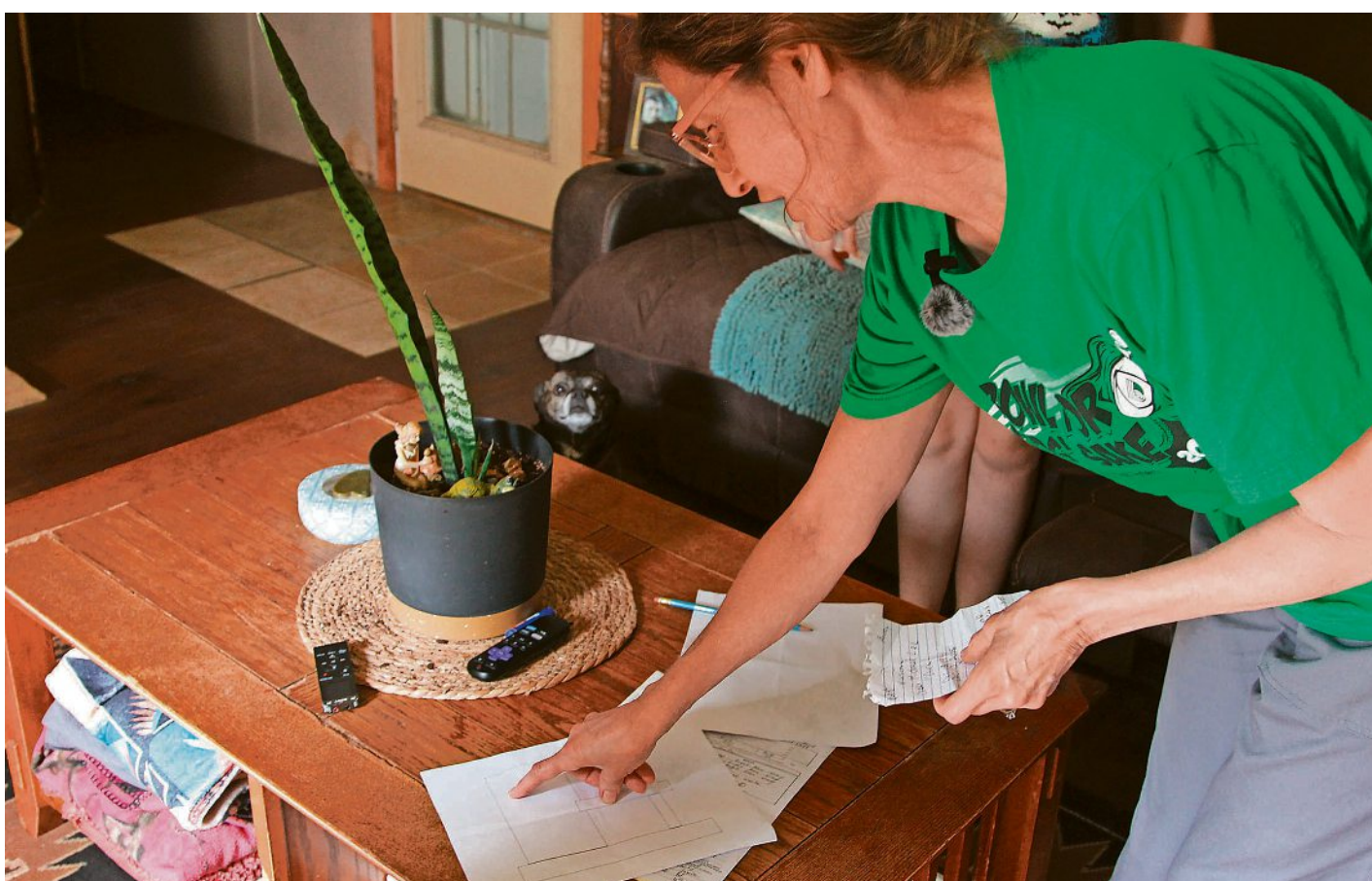
SPORTS, 1B

SPRINGFIELD NEWS-LEADER

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'I don't want another mother to feel like this'



Emily Hatcher-Irwin points out details for her son Michael Mason's headstone on paperwork from Wommack Monument Company on April 15. Mason, who spent his career in law enforcement, died by suicide on Dec. 14, 2025. SUSAN SZUCH/SPRINGFIELD NEWS-LEADER

Lawsuit challenges new tax proposals

Jason Hancock
MISSOURI INDEPENDENT

A lawsuit filed Wednesday, May 13 seeks to knock a proposed constitutional amendment off Missouri's 2026 ballot that would give lawmakers new power to expand sales taxes to eliminate the income tax, arguing legislators bundled too many subjects into one proposal and wrote misleading ballot language.

The lawsuit, filed in Cole County Circuit Court by attorney Chuck Hatfield on behalf of a Missouri resident, challenges a proposed ballot question that would ask voters to amend the Missouri Constitution to begin phasing out the state individual income tax.

The measure, approved by the legislature last month, is expected to appear on the November ballot unless Gov. Mike Kehoe moves it to another election. Kehoe has made eliminating the income tax one of his top priorities, arguing it would make Missouri more competitive with states that do not tax individual income.

But the lawsuit argues the proposal is constitutionally defective and should be blocked from any ballot. In the alternative, it asks the court to rewrite the summary statement voters would see.

The lawsuits central legal argument is that the proposal violates constitutional limits on ballot measures by including more than one subject and effectively amending multiple articles of the Missouri Constitution.

"This is precisely the logrolling harm the multi-article rule was designed to prevent," the lawsuit argues, contending voters who support eliminating the income tax could be forced to also accept provisions they oppose, such as expanding the sales tax or changing how road funds and local taxes are handled.

The lawsuit also argues the proposal would improperly expand the constitutional role of the state auditor by requiring the office to calculate reduced tax rates triggered by the amendment. The petition contends that duty is not related to auditing the receipt or expenditure of public funds, which the Missouri Constitution says is the limit of the auditor's authority.

Instead, the lawsuit argues, the amendment would give the auditor a

Ozarks, national groups say 'not one more' law enforcement suicide



Michael Mason and his son, Jonah, sit together in this undated photo. PROVIDED BY EMILY HATCHER-IRWIN

Susan Szuch Springfield
News-Leader | USA TODAY NETWORK

Humansville Police Chief Michael Mason took his own life Dec. 14, 2025.

He was one of at least 27 law enforcement officers who died by suicide last year, according to the Law Enforcement Suicide Data Collection.

His mother, Emily Hatcher-Irwin, believes Mason's time in law enforcement and the subsequent lack of mental health support contributed to his death, especially after a 2023 suicide attempt after which he was given a choice to get help but be fired and lose his Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) certification, or to resign and keep his credentials.

Mason chose to resign. Domingo Herraiz, director of programs for the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), has spent the past decade championing officer wellness. However, progress can be slow to come to rural areas and that, combined with a higher risk of suicide and mental

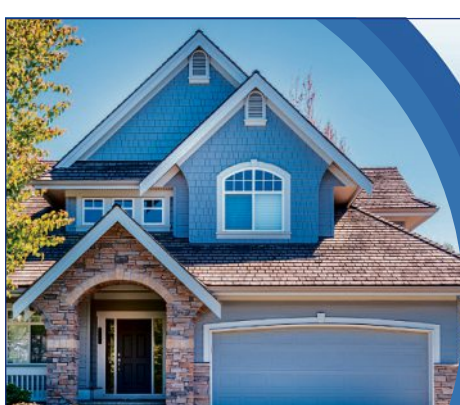
See SUICIDE, Page 2A

Editor's note: If you or someone you know is struggling or in crisis, you can call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255 or by dialing 988. If you are a current or former law enforcement officer, or a family member of one, you can call CopLine at 1-800-267-5463.

About this series

This article is one in a two-part series covering rural law enforcement and mental health, and is part of a larger project produced in partnership with Ozarks First. News-Leader reporter Susan Szuch and Ozarks First digital content producer Kathryn Skopec have covered the late Humansville Police Chief Michael Mason's life and death since December. Szuch wrote the two-part series and narrated the two-part mini-documentary that Skopec produced. The documentary will air at 6 p.m. May 17. It can also be found on OzarksFirst.com.

See TAXES, Page 2A



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