Good afternoon from Jefferson City on this week-before-the-Super Bowl Sunday.

We have several more subscribers to our column in the past week and I want to welcome all of them. This is the column I write weekly detailing my thoughts on defense and military issues affecting Missouri, what I accomplished during the past week, and my plans for the week ahead.

The best news is that our Missouri Military Appreciation Day on February 5, 2020, is rapidly approaching. We have received lots of RSVP’s for the event and are looking for a large crowd of participants from around the state. We will be showcasing our installations, defense agencies, and Service members and families that help keep our nation safe.

If you have not yet let us know, please use the following RSVP link to let us know you are coming: MISSOURI MILITARY APPRECIATION DAY 2020.

Update on Military Appreciation Day 2020

This is the last update I will give before our plans are final for the Military Appreciation Day. We have a great line-up of speakers and have planned opportunities for interaction with our state’s military installation leaders and others in the Capitol.

If you have an interest in knowing the latest from Whiteman AFB, Fort Leonard Wood, the Missouri National Guard, and the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA) you need to join us for interaction with the leaders.

You will have an opportunity to hear from Governor Mike Parson, who will introduce our luncheon keynote speaker, the Honorable Charles (Fred) Drummond, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Force Education & Training, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Readiness. Patrick O’Brien, Director of DoD’s Office of Economic Adjustment (OEA) will describe OEA’s role on behalf of DoD in supporting state and local governments as they respond to major defense program changes and related topics.
If you need any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me at Joe.Driskill@ded.mo.gov or by calling me at 573-526-0186.

**Governor Mike Parson at Fort Leonard Wood**

I had the pleasure of accompanying **Governor Mike Parson** last Tuesday as he traveled to **Fort Leonard Wood** for a roundtable discussion with Soldiers, Airmen, and Marines and their military spouses about quality of life issues here in Missouri. The roundtable was an effort by the Governor to hear directly from service members—and especially their spouses—regarding their thoughts on how the state of Missouri can make their stay in Missouri the best in the country.

**Mr. Gregg Thompson**, Deputy to the Commanding General, was host for the discussion, which was held at **Countee Hall**, the historic Black Officers Club on the installation that is almost unique in the country. More than 30 uniformed service members and spouses, and community and business leaders, took part in the informal discussion.

An area of focus for discussion was the Governor’s support for legislation that would create full professional license reciprocity for military spouses who transfer to Missouri as a part of a permanent change of station (PCS) move. The legislation, sponsored by **Representative Steve Lynch** in the House and **Senator Justin Brown** in the Senate, would have Missouri join 15 other states around the country that would give quick licenses to professional spouses who are a part of a military move.

**GeoFutures**

On Friday I joined a focus group in St. Louis (by video link because of the snowy weather) that is gathering opinions from civic, economic development and university leaders regarding the **GeoFutures Initiative**, a study backed by civic leaders in St. Louis that is a response to the **National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency’s (NGA)** investment of almost $2.0 billion in a new St. Louis operation. The study is examining St. Louis’ assets and opportunities in the geospatial sector, which is becoming critical to everything from agriculture to finance to national security.

The focus group on Friday was designed to discuss the national security and intelligence community opportunities that may become apparent once the new NGA facility is in operation, which is now planned for 2015. The lead researcher at TEConomy Partners, **Mitch Horowitz**, also performed a similar study more than 20 years ago to understand how St. Louis and Missouri could develop its plant and life sciences industry. The Plant and Life Sciences report painted an optimistic picture but outlined a list of needs, including skilled workers, capital and lab space.
The GeoFutures report is due for release in March and is expected to detail the roles to be played by civic, business, economic development and state and local leaders in supporting the NGA’s mission and the commercial opportunities in the geospatial realm that will be apparent in the St. Louis region.

Week ahead

In addition to working on final details for the Military Appreciation Day on February 5, I plan to be in Kansas City for the KC Chamber’s Military Affairs Committee (MAC) meeting, and also interact with leaders from Missouri chapters of the Military Officers Association of America (MOAA). I also plan to meet with Col Grace Link, Executive Director of the Missouri Veterans Commission to discuss our work on policy initiatives to better address work opportunities for Service members with connections to Missouri who transition out of the military.

Until next time, I welcome your feedback on the work I am doing on behalf of our military and defense sector.