

COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

Fair Tax rally to be held Saturday

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COLUMBIA — When Ray Walker moved to Jefferson City in 2005, he said the words “fair tax” were basically unknown.

“Now, it’s not uncommon to go down the street and mention ‘fair tax,’” said Walker, who is the director of the group in Missouri’s 4th Congressional District backing the tax reform movement. “Invariably, someone is going to know about it.”

Walker is helping organize the [Midwest Fair Tax Rally](#) from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m Saturday at the Boone County Fairgrounds. What started as a small regional event, he said, has ended up attracting national attention.

“We are having people who have at least indicated interest from all across the nation,” Walker said, listing stats. He said the interest has prompted his group to block out rooms at local hotels.

The day-long rally will feature scheduled speakers including Joe Wurzelbacher, better known as Joe the Plumber during the 2008 presidential campaign. Other speakers include Missouri Rep. Ed Emery, R-Lamar; Jessica Wexler, an organizer for President Barack Obama and Sen. Claire McCaskill’s campaigns; and Neal Boortz, radio host and political commentator.

“What I’d like to see is folks come together and leave there with a significant amount of knowledge that will energize them to see this fair tax passed at the Missouri state level and the national level,” Walker said. “I want to see people leave here with the drive and the passion to get it done. This country is in financial trouble.”

The ["fair tax"](#) plan is a proposal that aims to replace the federal income and payroll taxes with a national retail sales tax. Instead of being taxed for income, individuals are taxed for spending. The plan calls for an increase in sales taxes for all goods and service, which is compensated by rebates issued to taxpayers. Proponents of the bill also say that the plan is revenue-neutral, meaning there is no net loss or gain from the halt of income tax revenue.

This federal income tax legislation is similar, but not identical, to the [state tax reform legislation](#); the state’s legislation also wanted to abolish the income tax. Local supporter and Columbia insurance broker James Coyne testified on behalf of legislation approved earlier this year by the state House of Representatives to replace the state income tax by raising the sales tax on goods and services. “This needs to be a non-partisan idea,” Coyne said.

Coyne also said it would be nice to see [Rep. Chris Kelly, D-Columbia](#), at the rally. Kelly joined Emery and other Missouri Republicans to push the consumption tax legislature through the House. The Senate did not approve the legislation.

When asked if he would be attending the rally, Kelly replied, “No, I’ll be canoeing.” Kelly dislikes the term “fair tax,” saying it panders to political and editorial slogans. He would rather use “sales tax” to describe the state initiative.

Kelly believes that compared to the income tax, the sales tax is more difficult to cheat and, logistically speaking, less expensive to collect. Also, it’s far more popular of an tax option than the income tax.

The Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy ([ITTEP](#)), a Washington-based policy research organization that has an office in Columbia, differs greatly from the rally organizers’ point of view. In a May 1 report from this year, ITEP says the combined sales tax rate on every purchase would have to increase to about 12.5 percent – up from 5.11 percent – for the bill to be truly

revenue-neutral.

ITEP also says that the burden of the increased sales tax will fall on lower income and middle-class families, while Missouri's wealthiest 1 percent would see the highest tax cuts.

A schedule and other details about the rally can be found at midwestrally.com.