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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Historic Moment for Missouri's Mental Health System**

*Fulton State Hospital, Nixon Forensic Center Ribbon Cutting ceremony brings together two Governors and their dedication to mental health*

JEFFERSON CITY, MO – Today marked another historic moment for the state's mental health system. Governor Mike Parson, Department of Mental Health (DMH) leaders, the 55<sup>th</sup> Governor Jay Nixon as well as many other dignitaries and special guests participated in the official ribbon cutting ceremony at the front of the newly constructed Jeremiah W. "Jay" Nixon Forensic Center facility, 600 E. 5<sup>th</sup> Street, Fulton, MO at 10:30 a.m.

"This is an exciting time for staff, the community, and the entire state to see years of hard work come to completion," **Governor Parson** said. "Missouri continues to make significant investments in strengthening and funding our mental health system and this new facility is another important resource to help ensure Missourians can access the services they need."

"The safety of staff and patients is critical to creating an environment of recovery and treatment," said Mark Stringer, Director of the Department of Mental Health. "This new high security facility that will last for many generations and have the flexibility to change for future needs."

In 2014, Governor Nixon led the charge along with several key legislators and DMH leadership to convince the General Assembly to back the plan to replace the state's outdated and deteriorating maximum-security psychiatric facility at Fulton with a new modern mental hospital that will be safer and more conducive to modern treatment.

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More than 200 people attended the ribbon cutting ceremony including current and former legislators, Callaway County and City of Fulton elected officials, staff from the Department of Mental Health and the Office of Administration as well as several Fulton community members.

Fulton State Hospital, built in 1851, is the oldest state psychiatric hospital west of the Mississippi River. The Biggs and Guhleman Forensic Centers on the campus treat patients with serious mental illness who are committed by Missouri courts for evaluation and treatment related to a crime, or who have seriously assaulted patients or staff in other state psychiatric hospitals.

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