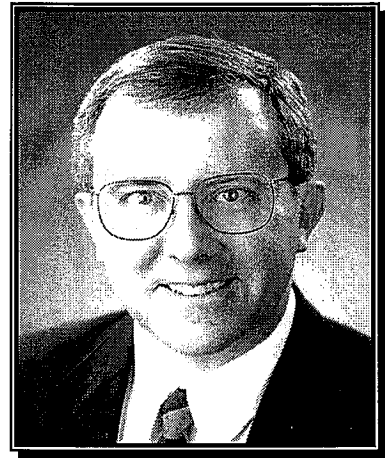


From The Desk Of...

Jay Scott Emler

Kansas Senate 35th District



~Week of February 20 - February 24, 2006~

- **Animal Cruelty**

Senate Bill 408, also known as "Scruffy's Law" or "Magnum's Law," passed by a vote of 40-0 last night. The bill makes extreme intentional animal cruelty a felony with a penalty of 30 days to one year imprisonment and a fine of \$500 to \$5000. It contains exceptions for farming, veterinary practices, the sport of rodeo, and dealing with pests or animals posing a threat to people, their animals or their property. All felony offenders will also be required to undergo a psychological evaluation and register as a violent offender.

- **Child Safety**

The Senate also passed a pair of bills aimed at protecting children in vehicles.. House Bill 2611 requires all children under the age of eight to be secured in a booster seat unless they meet a minimum height or weight requirement. It was approved by a vote of 22-18. House Bill 2732, which passed by a vote of 36-4, makes it illegal to leave any child under the age of eight in a vehicle without the supervision of a person over the age of 13.

- **Estate Tax**

The Senate passed SB 365, which makes the Kansas estate tax a stand-alone tax, rather than a tax tied to the federal estate tax. The tax will sunset on January 1, 2010, and is expected to be revenue-neutral between 2007 and 2009. The bill passed by a vote of 40-0.

- **Funeral Picketing**

Senate Bill 421 prohibits picketing or protesting within 300 feet of a funeral location, but recognizes that public spaces such as streets and sidewalks within that area must remain open for their traditional uses and that protestors cannot obstruct the use of public spaces during any protest. The bill passed by a vote of 40-0.

- **Health Insurance Appeal Rights**

The Senate also approved SB 522, which provides consumers with additional rights pertaining to appeals of adverse health care decisions by their insurance companies. It is particularly important to consumers

fighting diseases such as cancer, who desire to receive coverage for experimental drugs in a more timely manner than the traditional appeals process allows. It passed by a vote of 40-0.

- **Long-Term Care**

A long-term care bill of rights was passed by the Senate by a vote of 40-0. It establishes guidelines for future policies on eligibility, choice of services, access to services, reimbursements, and reporting requirements.

- **Video Competition**

Substitute for SB 449 was also approved by a vote of 40-0. The bill is aimed at increasing competition for in-home video services by expediting the entry into the video market of telecommunications companies. The effect will be to allow phone companies to compete with cable companies for providing video services (like TV) to consumers.

- **Utilities**

Senate Bill 350 would allow for statewide price deregulation on packages or bundles of telecommunication services. The bill would also allow for price deregulation on individual components of telecommunication packages or bundles in any exchange with 75,000 or more local exchange access lines and in any exchange that has at least two non-affiliated telecommunications providers. Rates for lifeline services would still be subject to price cap regulation. It passed by a vote of 40-0.

- **TOLL FREE LEGISLATIVE HOTLINE**

The State Library will continue its practice of operating the toll free hotline for Kansans to call their legislators and leave brief messages. The hotline number is 1-800-432-3924. If you are receiving this newsletter and really would like to be taken off my list, just let me know. My legislative district includes: Barton, Dickinson, Ellsworth, Lincoln, Marion, McPherson and Rice counties. If you know of others that would like to receive this newsletter, have them contact me and I will add them to my list. I prefer to send by e-mail since the cost is essentially free, but I do have a limited legislative postage allowance, which is largely reserved for distributing this letter.

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