

From The Desk Of...

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Kansas Senate 35th District

~Week of January 15 - January 19, 2007~

This marks the end of the 2nd week of this legislative session. It has been extremely busy, although we only debated two minor bills on the Senate floor. Those bills were basically technical cleanup bills. We also voted on several gubernatorial appointments that were made since the end of the session in May of last year. All of those appointments were confirmed.

Some of the activities that have been going on, however, in the Utilities Committee, we had an update from the Kansas Energy Council Co-Chairmen Lt. Gov. Mark Parkinson and Ken Frahm, requesting some legislation on energy. We also had presentations on the Weatherization Assistance Program from the Kansas Housing Resources Corporation and the KEEP Program, which is Kansas Energy Efficiency Program, also from the Kansas Housing Resources Corporation. We also had a hearing on the Kansas Underground Utility Damage Prevention Act that would add potable water facilities and sewer facilities to the One Call system. Kansas is one of only three states, the other two being Vermont and West Virginia, that does not include underground water facilities in the One Call program.

The Ways and Means committee this week heard a report on inmate population projections from the Secretary of Corrections. We also had an extremely interesting presentation on Statehouse renovation by the Statehouse architect and we had a review from the Kansas Department of Revenue, Secretary Joan Wagnon, on delinquent tax collection. Today we will hear a caseload summary from the Secretary of the Kansas Department of Social & Rehabilitation Services, and, of course, as many of you know, the caseloads continue to go up and are one of our mandated funding items.

In the Commerce Committee, we had an absolutely fascinating report from the new Executive Director of the Kansas Bio-Science Authority. There are some really amazing things that are taking place under the guidance of the Bio-Science Authority, and Kansas is in the running to receive a \$500 million federal project on bio-science. The two cities that are in the running are Leavenworth and Manhattan, and that is, of course, because of the university in Manhattan. There only eighteen sites in the United States that are in the running and two of them are in Kansas, so that was a really interesting report.

A couple of other things to just let you know what is being debated in some of the committees. One is the smoking ban, SB 37, which was heard in Senate Judiciary this week and another is the Social Security exemption for seniors, where the social security benefits would not be taxed under State income tax that was heard in the Senate Tax Committee on Tuesday of this week. The Federal and State Affairs Committee had a report on Immigration issues and I did sit in on that from a Homeland Security standpoint, because I work at the national level on the Homeland Security issues dealing with the Real ID Act.

Again, a busy week and it will continue. As you hear issues that concern you, make certain that you contact me. I would remind you, however, if you send me an e-mail, make sure you include your street address. I receive anywhere from 60 to 100 e-mails a day and I need to make sure I am responding to my constituents and not to somebody in another part of the state. I want to be responsive to you, so please include your home address so that I know I am being responsive to my constituents.

- **Smoking Ban**

Smoking Ban (SB 37): The Senate Judiciary Committee heard testimony from proponents and opponents of the proposed smoking ban. Many issues were discussed, including health concerns, economic impact to businesses, business rights, potential cost savings and lost revenues to the state and the impact of a statewide ban versus the current city-by-city model. Still to be decided are exemptions where smoking would continue to be allowed.

- **Social Security Exemption for Seniors (SB 29)**

The Senate Tax Committee heard testimony Tuesday on the proposal exempting Social Security payments from state income tax. The Senate will possibly take action next Thursday.

- **Immigration**

The Federal & State Affairs Committee was briefed this week on the federal Real ID Act, which mandates changes in how states ensure the accurate identity of people who are issued state identification, including driver's licenses. The mandates are extensive and expensive, and no state is currently in compliance. The deadline for compliance is May 2008, and the consequence of failing to comply is that state-issued identification (i.e., driver's licenses) are no longer valid for boarding commercial aircraft, entering federal buildings, entering nuclear power plants, and "any other purposes that the secretary determines."

- **Franchise Tax (SB 50)**

Also this week, SB 50 had a hearing in the tax committee, and that deals with the franchise tax for corporations.

The Tax Committee heard testimony Thursday regarding the repeal of the Franchise Tax (one of the GOP Priorities for Progress). There is similar legislation proposed in the House (HB 2031).

- **TOLL FREE LEGISLATIVE HOTLINE**

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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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