

From The Desk Of...

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Kansas Senate 35th District



~Week of February 5 - February 9, 2007~

It has been another very busy week, and a very interesting week, as well. We started out the week with a Joint Session of the Legislature, which is very unusual, and our speaker was Senator Pat Roberts. Senator Roberts was talking to the Joint Session about the facility that I mentioned to you last week. It is the bio and agro defense facility that is possibly going to be placed by the Federal Government in either Leavenworth or Manhattan, Kansas. Of course, the draw for Manhattan is the State bio-security facility that we finally opened last year and dedicated in October. A tremendous opportunity, but as a result of that, there were actually three pieces of legislation that had to be introduced, have hearings, be passed and move on to the Governor this week. That is extremely fast for any legislation. However, all three of those pieces of legislation were passed this week.

- **SB 252 ~ National and Agro-Defense Facility**

SB 252 permits the transfer of the necessary property from the University in Manhattan to the Federal Government for purposes of building the security facility. House Bill 2303 establishes the working group that is necessary for working with the federal government on all of the impact studies. House Concurrent Resolution 5009 shows the support of the State of Kansas for these facilities coming to the state. All three of these measures passed both houses unanimously and that is another unusual event. Usually, there are a few dissenting votes. The only reason that we did not get a few votes is that there were a few people who were out sick.

SB 252, HB 2303 and HCR 5009 all passed the Senate and House unanimously.

- **Ways and Means Subcommittees**

In addition to the regular committee work this week, the Ways and Means Subcommittees have really started meeting. They meet as early as 7:00 in the morning, meet over the noon hour and we meet when the day is done. But, this is the only way to get the budget taken apart and put back together again so that the legislature understands what the Governor's budget is. That process, as you all know, takes a long time, and many of you think, "why is this not the first thing that if done". The reason is that it takes a long time to take the budget apart and put it back together again through the subcommittee process. Of course, the same thing is going on in the House, because, as we all know, different people have different ideas about what is important in the budget.

- **SB 29, 50, & 213 ~ Tax Relief**

The Senate Assessment and Taxation Committee is moving closer to sending legislation to the Senate floor after hearing a report from the subcommittee established last week to review a number of tax reduction options. Generally, the main areas of tax relief proposed relate to the potential exemption for Social Security benefits from state income tax; corporate franchise tax; corporate income tax; and tax credit and tax incentive restructuring. The committee is aiming for a \$15 million package of tax relief that the Legislature should consider for FY 2008. However, if the revenue picture brightens in the near future, additional resources could be earmarked for enhancing the tax relief package.

The subcommittee believes that providing a tax exemption for Social Security benefits should be a priority and recommends there should be an elimination of the Kansas tax on earnings by exempting from income tax altogether benefits received by both single and joint filers with a federal adjusted gross income of \$50,000.00 and below. **This would allow for \$5.4 million attributable to social security tax cut.**

Franchise tax relief is being addressed by recommending that the franchise tax exemption be raised from \$100,000 to \$500,000 and computation of the tax starts with only the amount of net worth in excess of the exemption threshold level. **This proposal contributes \$10.4 million to tax relief.**

The tax credit and tax incentives restructuring recommendations of the Governor claimed to be revenue-neutral are still a work-in-progress. The subcommittee finds that some additional changes are necessary to allow small and medium-sized businesses to continue to participate in the programs and this will have a slightly negative fiscal impact. They are still considering several options at this point.

- **SB 131 & SB 135 ~ Election reform**

SB 131 establishes a deadline of two working days before the election for the appointment of authorized poll agents and SB 135 outlines the qualifications by requiring poll workers to be 18 and registered voters in Kansas, reside in the Kansas county or contiguous county in which they are to serve, and wear an identifying badge. **SB 131 passed 32 yeas and 7 nays. SB 135 passed 29 yeas and 8 nays.**

- **SCR 1606 ~ Designation of Animal Health Corridor**

Noting that 37 global or US animal health companies have their headquarters and an additional 120 have a presence in the corridor between Manhattan, KS and the Kansas City Metropolitan area, this resolution designates the region as the KC Animal Health Corridor. SCR 1606 passed the Senate unanimously.

- **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 who would like to receive this newsletter, have them contact me and I will add them to my list. I prefer to send this letter 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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NOTE: I receive many emails and I need to make certain 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 street address so that I know I am being responsive to my constituents.