

# From The Desk Of...

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~Week of March 19 - March 23, 2007~

The budget debate has moved into full swing now, because the conference committees started yesterday afternoon at 3:30. As I have told you in the past, I am one of the conferees on the Senate side, and that means that the Chairman of Ways and Means and the Ranking Minority and I meet with the House members and we go over every item in the two budget bills that are not the same. There are hundreds and hundreds of items in the budget bill, but we only talk about those that are not identical. In simply reading through one line, basically, of each and the House saying whether they were taking the House or Senate position, it took about 2-1/2 hours yesterday to walk through the first time. This afternoon, after committee meetings, and after the House gets finished debating the gaming bills, we will meet again. I suspect we will meet into the evening. We already know that we will be meeting tomorrow, as well.

- **SB 357, 358, 359 ~ Budget Bills**

With a combination of three bills, the Senate this week completed initial work and established its bargaining position for conference committee on developing the 2008 state budget. SB 357 ~ the major appropriations bill started at \$5.902 billion and grew \$2.8 million by the end of the debate. The Senate proposal is \$110 million less than the Governor's proposal and \$50 million less than the House. Still absent and slated for the omnibus are proposed increases for the state pay plan, funding for deferred maintenance for Regents institutions and funding for various state agencies and programs. There is still much work to be done, but the Senate's initial proposal now goes to conference committee for further debate.

- **HB 2310 ~ Bullying**

The Senate this week with a vote of 38 to 2 took action to require local school boards to adopt policies prohibiting bullying. The measure also requires each school district to adopt and implement strategic plans to address bullying, which will include provisions for training and education for both staff and students.

- **HB 2140 ~ English as the Official Language of Kansas**

The Senate voted to designate English as the official language of the State of Kansas for all public documents and official public meetings. The measure clearly states that no state agency or local government will be required to provide documents in a language other than English. It does allow for use of other languages at the agency or local government's discretion. Accommodating individuals with disabilities, the bill authorizes the use of Braille in signage and documents, and communication in American Sign Language. **The bill passed 32 to 8.**

- **SB 189 ~ Hunter Education:**

The Senate **voted 39 to 1** to allow a person who is 16 years or older to obtain a one-time deferral of completion of hunter education before hunting in Kansas. The deferral is valid until the end of the current license year for which it is issued. Young hunters eligible for the deferral will be able to purchase an apprentice hunting license which will allow them to hunt only under the direct supervision of a licensed adult who is 18 or more years of age. The bill also deleted current law which prohibited the Secretary of Wildlife and Parks from issuing a big game permit using a bow to individuals under 14 unless they have completed a bow hunting safety education course.

#### **Tax Bills:**

The Senate passed \$23 million in business and individual tax cuts. The business tax relief includes a \$10.5 million reduction in the corporate franchise tax and also various tax credits aimed at inciting investments. Following are a list of the bills:

**SB 291** ~ Places a 10% excise tax on certain items purchased in sexually explicit businesses, as well as amounts charged by escort services and items purchased from adult bookstores or video stores. **Passed 36 to 4.**

**HB 2171** ~ Makes changes necessary to maintain compliance with the multi-state Streamlined Sales and Use Tax Agreement. The bill changes sales tax refund procedures and modifies various statutory definitions. **Passed 27 to 11.**

**HB 2240** ~ Expands a sales tax exemption for certain labor services to include repairs necessitated by windstorms, ice storms and terrorism to facilities, including electric distribution and transmission lines, of cooperatives and municipal and quasi-municipal corporations. **Passed 40 to 0.**

**SB 382** ~ Provides a sales tax exemption for purchases incurred during the construction of prisons. Additionally, it allows sales tax exemption of purchases for benevolent and charitable organizations. **Passed 39 to 1.**

**SB 375** ~ Expands local sales tax authority to Franklin, Linn and Miami for refurbishing a courthouse or building a jail. Also, the bill authorizes Johnson County to establish the Johnson County Education

Research Triangle Authority (JCERTA) and to levy special sales and property taxes and adds a sales tax exemption for specialized farm machinery and equipment. **Passed 40 to 0.**

**HB 2031** ~ Increases the net worth threshold for corporate income tax from \$100,000 to \$500,000 and in cases of a net worth greater than \$500,000 applies only to the amount over the threshold. Additionally, it allows for the exemption of Social Security income for Kansans whose adjusted gross income is less than \$50,000. **Passed 40 to 0.**

**SB 180** ~ Allows KPERS retirees to rollover the money from the KPERS fund into other tax sheltered investments and the dollars to remain sheltered from Kansas income tax. **Passed 40 to 0.**

**SB 327** ~ Provides a refundable income tax credit for retail motor fuel dealers selling renewable fuels and biodiesel. The main purpose is to incite retailers to move to the selling of E-85 blended fuel. **Passed 40 to 0.**

**HB 2405** ~ Expands tax credits for the development and maintenance of historical property. **Passed 40 to 0.**

**SB 342** ~ More clearly defines job tax credits and adds a number of jobs to the list of occupations eligible for credits. **Passed 40 to 0.**

**SB 298** ~ Provides property tax exemption for storage structures built for the storage of cellulosic material to be used in the production of cellulosic alcohol and co-products. **Passed 40 to 0.**

**SB 144** ~ Renews for 2007 and 2008 the mandatory school district general fund property tax levy at its current level of 20 mills. **Passed 40 to 0.**

**SB 215** ~ Makes changes to the Homestead Property Act by increasing the maximum refund available under the program from the current \$600 to \$700; reduces the statutory assumption that renters' effective property tax burden is equivalent to 20 percent of their total rent to 15 percent; and adds a new residential valuation ceiling that would prohibit any homeowner with a residence valued at \$300,000 or more from participating in the program. **Passed 40 to 0.**

**HB 2044** ~ Mitigates property tax shift from commercial and industrial machinery and equipment property tax exemption enacted in 2006 by making several amendments to the distribution formula relating to "slider" replacement revenues for local units of government. This essentially helps counties make up the income lost from exempting manufacturing machinery and equipment from ad valorem tax. **Passed 40 to 0.**

**HB 2038** ~ Provides a property tax exemption for nuclear generation facilities and exempts them from various requirements; several income tax incentives for qualified investments in fuel storage and blending equipment used for biofuels; and various tax incentives for renewable electric co-generation facilities and certain waste heat utilization systems. **Passed 39 to 1.**

- **TOLL FREE LEGISLATIVE HOTLINE**

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