

Senator Jay Emler

Kansas Senate District 35



From the Desk of Jay Scott Emler

Weeks of January 11 to January 21, 2010

On Monday January 11, the 2010 Legislature session convened. There were no committee meetings held.

Ways and Means Committee Update

Tuesday, January 12, marked the first meeting of the Ways and Means Committee. The Committee room and my office are now located in the newly renovated south wing.

The Committee heard from Secretary of Administration and Budget Director Duane Goossen on the Governor's FY 2011 Budget. An overview of the Governor's Budget can be found at http://budget.ks.gov/publications/FY2011/FY2011_Overview.pdf. The Committee also heard from Josh Svaty, Acting Secretary of the Department of Agriculture. Secretary Svaty discussed the suspension of lodging inspections by the state and the issues involved with counties in performing that function. The suspension resulted from the budget reductions to the Department.

Two bills were introduced by Senator John Vratil (R-Leawood) related to Teacher Contract law (SB 355) and school finance (SB 354).

On Wednesday, January 13, three bills were introduced: The first: SB 362, introduced by Senator John Vratil (R-Leawood), deals with school district continuing contract law. The second: SB 363, introduced by Senator Vratil, deals with earned income tax credit. The third: SB 364, introduced by Senator Emler, deals with workers compensation for the state fair. The committee also heard testimony from Major General Tod Bunting, Adjutant General (TAG), on the closing of 18 armories throughout Kansas, resulting from budget cuts in FY 2010. The TAG also gave testimony on the State Disaster Fund. In FY 2011, the state may need \$30 million to pay for past disasters. The Governor's budget contains \$5 million for this payment. Testimony was also heard from Secretary of Revenue, Joan Wagnon. Secretary Wagnon

informed the Committee that her agency was able to settle some tax assessments, resulting in the collection of approximately \$40 million. Lastly, the Committee heard testimony from Rochelle Chronister, chairperson of Facilities Closure and Realignment Commission, on the commissions' recommendations to the Governor. One Recommendation was to close the Kansas Neurological Institute in Topeka.

On Thursday the 14th, three bills were introduced: The first: SB 365, introduced by Senator Jim Barnett (R-Emporia) dealing with legislative subsistence pay. The second: SB 378, introduced by Senator Ruth Teichman (R-Stafford), dealing with housing loan deposit program. The third: SB 382, introduced by Senator Carolyn McGinn (R-Sedgwick) dealing with Historical tax credits. The Committee heard from Jim Garner, Secretary of the Department of Labor, on the status of the Kansas Unemployment Trust Fund. He informed the Committee that Kansas would soon join 25 other states and have to borrow funds from the federal government to cover unemployment claims. The Committee heard from Tom Thorton, President and CEO of the Kansas Bioscience Authority. Thorton testified on the progress of the Kansas Bioscience Authority projects and provided an update on the National Bio and Agro-Defense Facility (NBAF) in Manhattan.

On Friday the 15, the Committee heard from Acting Secretary of the Department of Commerce, Bill Thorton, on the IMPACT program, Economic Development Incentives, and the Cerner project. Tracy Streeter, Director of the Kansas Water Office, gave testimony on the Kansas Federal Reservoir Debt. His testimony outlined the states' water reservoirs including their capacity, costs and contract terms with the federal government.

On Monday the 18th the Legislature was not in session in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

On Tuesday the 19th, one bill was introduced: SB 385, introduced by Senator Vratil (R-Leawood) concerning temporary education recovery act. The Ways and Means Committee began to hear testimony on SB 350, the rescission bill. The bill deals with supplemental appropriations for FY 2010 and enacts the remainder of the Governors' July and November allotments that require legislative approval. The Committee heard testimony from two of the affected agencies. There were no other conferees wishing to testify, so the hearing was then closed.

On Wednesday the 20th, three bills were introduced: The first: SB 403, introduced by Sen. Dwayne

Umbarger (R-Thayer) concerning legislative leadership compensation. The second: SB 404, introduced by Sen. Kelly Kultula (D-Kansas City) concerning early high school graduation scholarships. The third: SB 405, introduced by Sen. Vratil, concerning publication of notices. The committee continued to work on SB 350 and it was passed on a vote of eleven to two with two amendments. The first, proposed by Senator Emler, cut legislative franking (postage) privileges in half. The second, proposed by Senator Vratil, reduced the cut for legislative agencies from ten percent to five percent, equalizing the reduction with the executive and judicial branches of government.

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