

NEWS FROM THE STATE CAPITOL
Representative Sydney Carlin, Dist 66
Week 2: January 18-22, 2010

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From the Minority Leader's Office

Democratic caucus unveils proposal to cut legislative spending by nearly 10 percent

Kansas has endured five rounds of budget cuts in the last year, with another revenue shortfall expected for 2011. As a result, every state agency has been significantly scaled back- except the budget of the Kansas Legislature. While House Republican leaders scheduled another day off for Friday, House Democrats announced a proposal to rein in spending within the legislative branch.

"It's time for the Legislature to make the same sacrifices that the rest of state government and Kansas families have been making since this recession began," said House Democratic Leader Paul Davis, Lawrence. "Everyone else has been spending less and doing without. Now it's our turn."

While agencies have suffered deep cuts affecting the delivery of essential government services, the Legislature has allowed its budget to grow by 29 percent in the last five fiscal years, for a total spending increase of \$3.6 million. House Democrats call upon Republican legislative leadership to endorse legislation to affect the following cuts in the Legislature's own budget:

- A five percent cut in legislators' session pay;
(Saving approximately \$66,000)
- A two-year moratorium on legislative pay increases;
(Preventing increased spending)
- The adoption of a nonpartisan redistricting commission;
(Saving approximately \$600,000)
- A five percent cut to Legislative Division of Post Audit;
(Saving approximately \$128,000)
- A two-year moratorium on any further spending for the legislative computerization process;

- (Saving approximately \$450,000)
- A 50 percent cut in legislators' franking privileges.
(Saving approximately \$128,000)

If passed, this proposal will save Kansas approximately \$1.37 million and reduce legislative spending by approximately nine percent.

"We aren't going to fill the entire budget gap with this proposal alone, but this is about leading by example" said Davis. "Every penny we cut from our own budget is a penny we don't have to cut from public schools and vulnerable seniors. These are reasonable, cost-saving measures that will enable the Legislature to be part of the solution to this crisis."

I definitely support this proposal.

THE UNEMPLOYMENT TRUST FUND has been severely depleted over the past year. As a result of reduced unemployment tax rates, as well as an increase in those collecting benefits, the fund has dropped to below \$100M. We are fortunate to remain among the 23 other states that do not have outstanding loans from the Federal Unemployment Fund, some owing billions of dollars. To boost our own fund and remain among the ranks of those 23 states, we need to return to the level of unemployment tax, prior to that of 2007.

THE KANSAS NATIONAL GUARD has closed 18 of its 56 armories in the state. The armory in Manhattan will remain in operation. These closures are a result of budget cuts over the past decade, utility costs increasing by over \$500K, and a fundamental change in demographics and key transportation routes from when the facilities were built 50 years ago. This restructuring and reallocation of resources will help the Kansas National Guard better deal with crises faced by Kansas and our nation.

KANSAS DISASTER COSTS Kansas is continually dealing with Nature's wrath. The 2 floods in '07 and the terrible winter storms of '06 and '07 racked up a bill of \$6.5M for the Kansas government, nearly \$100K of which we still owe. This fiscal year we have budgeted for \$5M in disaster relief, even though it is projected that we will have to spend in the neighborhood of \$30M. This is a budget gap that needs to be filled in order to be prepared to protect our citizens.

THE LODGING INSPECTION PROGRAM was transferred to the Kansas Department of Agriculture in October of 2008 and in 2009 the Legislature took action to increase the number of lodging inspections. Secretary Josh Svaty reported to the House Appropriations committee that the lodging inspection program conduct 745 inspections in fiscal year 2009. During those inspections 2,562 violations were documented at the lodging establishments.

In calendar year 2009 there were 132 complaints filed with the program. Those complaints were for everything from bed bugs to guest safety issues, such as,

improperly functioning smoke detectors; 30% of those complaints turned out to be valid.

This year, due to budget reductions, the Department of Agriculture made the decision to suspend lodging inspections, including complaint investigations, for the remainder of this fiscal year (2010) and fiscal year 2011.

KANSAS DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE has been steadily increasing individual and corporate BACK TAX SETTLEMENTS with those who have gotten behind on their state taxes for one reason or another. These collections have been a steadily increasing source of revenue for our state for a decade. Last year alone, \$140M was raked in through such settlements. In the first half of this fiscal year, the Kansas Department of Revenue has already captured \$40M in unpaid taxes.

SCHOOL FUNDING continues to be a key issue. Adequately funding our schools and ensuring that students receive a quality education that will prepare them for the work force is important not just to them, but to the economy of Kansas. While it is imperative to adequately fund our schools, it is also important to see that those funds are allocated wisely. Testimony was presented in committee this week regarding responsible school funding and educational requirements.

While across the board cuts are one way to go about things, they can also gut what we have worked so hard to build. On the other hand, voluntary Post Audit reviews, as an audit of the Derby school district has proved, are effective ways of finding opportunities for cost savings and increasing efficiency within individual districts. The Derby audit found \$1M in potential savings in a \$50M budget. The district had requested the audit voluntarily and their Board is hoping to implement these savings.

Keep in Touch

It is a special honor to serve as your state representative. I value and need your input on the various issues facing state government. Please feel free to contact me with your comments and questions. My office address is Room 451S, Docking State Office Building, Topeka, KS 66612. You can reach me at (785) 296-7657 or call the legislative hotline at 1-800-432-3924 to leave a message for me. Additionally, you can e-mail me at Sydney.Carlin@house.ks.gov . You can also follow the legislative session online at www.kslegislature.org. and review my website for updates from time to time at www.sydneycarlin.com .

Rep. Sydney Carlin