

NEWS FROM THE STATE CAPITOL
Representative Sydney Carlin, Dist 66
Week 7: February 22-26, 2010



**FEDERAL STIMULUS MONEY FOR HEALTH RECORDS –
ADDS KANSAS JOBS**

The state of Kansas will receive \$9 million from the federal government in grants to help states, doctors and hospitals move from paper to computerized record keeping. Gov. Parkinson said, “This announcement is great news for Kansas as it will bring countless opportunities in terms of creating jobs, advancing technology and reducing our overall health care costs,”

Studies show electronic medical records help reduce medical errors and improve the quality of patient care. The goal is to help make electronic record-keeping technologies available to Kansas hospitals and primary care physicians by the year 2014 while helping train people for careers in health care and information technology. The grants come from two federal agencies. Health and Human Services Secretary Sebelius announced \$386 million in grants to advance electronic health records at the state level. Sebelius is also granting \$375 million to 32 nonprofit organizations for regional training of health care workers on these technologies.

U.S. Labor Secretary Hilda Solis announced around \$225 million to support 55 job-training programs in 30 states. The administration says around 15,000 people should get training in the health records technology field. In addition to the grant to the state, the Kansas Foundation for Medical Care received a \$7 million grant.

HOUSE TAX COMMITTEE BEGINS SERIES OF HEARINGS

After five rounds of budget cuts- and a \$400 million budget deficit still looming- revenue proposals have been a major component of the budget debate. The House Committee on Taxation began a two-week series on various proposals.

HCR 5028 would establish a three-year moratorium on the granting of new tax exemptions, tax credits or economic development incentive programs involving employer withholding taxes.

The Kansas Advisory Council on Intergovernmental Relations (KACIR) testified that the number of tax credits has increased exponentially in recent years, putting a significant dent in the state’s revenue stream. As we work through massive cuts in Medicaid and public schools, it is critical to protect what revenue we have until the economy stabilizes. Opponents of the proposal came primarily from the business community, who testified that a moratorium would prevent Kansas from being open to new business investment. This proposal highlights the need for clearly defined and consistent guidelines for granting exemptions in the future.

STATE WIDE SMOKING BAN PASSES

Governor Parkinson's proposal- House Bill 2221- makes a serious effort to protect the health of Kansans. This bill prohibits smoking in places of employment and restaurants and bars with no option of paying a fee to "opt out." It also helps to protect our workforce from involuntary inhalation of carcinogens as well as helps to discourage our youth from becoming regular smokers.

Currently, one in five high school students living in Kansas use some form of tobacco. If this trend continues, 54,000 Kansas youth are projected to die from smoking. Aside from health benefits, it is simply good economic policy to enact a strong statewide clean indoor air act. Our state spends \$196 million on Medicaid expenses related to tobacco use.



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, State Capitol, 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 <http://www.sydneycarlin.com>

Rep. Sydney Carlin