

March 16, 2007

I am happy to report that I have received about 400 surveys from you all. I am pleased that many of you have told me who you are and have written comments on the survey sheets. This information is most helpful. I am in Topeka today and my husband tells me that there are several more surveys at the house in Manhattan that I need to combine with the ones I have already tabulated. I will get the information out to you as soon as I can perhaps yet this weekend. I have truly enjoyed hearing from you on these questions. And even though I may have to vote before I report these back to you, I can assure you that I am considering all of the input I am receiving (as well as the most current information we have available here).

Thank you so very much for participating.

EXPANDED GAMBLING

Even before its bill is out of committee, a coalition of gambling supporters is pushing to change the legislation to focus more on casinos than slot machines at pari-mutuel racetracks. Dubbed the industry bill, it was considered Monday by the House Federal and State Affairs Committee in a room packed with spectators, many wearing yellow Stickers of support. The committee will consider two other bills this week focusing on casinos.

HB 2055, heard Monday, would allow a destination casino in southeast Kansas and potentially several in Wyandotte County and would allow slot machines at the state's pari-mutuel racetracks. That measure also would earmark revenues for the state employees retirement fund, university deferred maintenance and property tax relief. HB 2569 provides that casinos will be limited to those Kansas counties that border an out-of-state county with a casino. That provision would apply to Wyandotte, Sumner and Cherokee counties. Baxter Springs is in Cherokee County. It also would require a minimum \$250 million investment from any developer and at least a \$35 million application fee.

The third measure, HB 2568, will be heard today and has no minimum investment or restrictions on the location of casinos. Supporters of casinos say Kansas is missing a giant revenue stream and estimate the possible increase in state funds to be \$200 million each year. Opponents say that number doesn't take into account social costs of serving gambling addicts. The state constitution doesn't allow for casinos unless they are state-owned, and the proposed bills all would provide that the state own and delegate operation of casinos in the state. The proposals being heard this week have relatively conservative regulations compared to neighboring states. Before any casino could be built, the county

where it is to be located and all surrounding counties would have to vote to approve it. Under those two bills, casinos also would be prohibited from having ATMs or any credit cards on the premise. One bill would require a casino to enforce a weekly loss limit of \$500 per gambler. Missouri has a two-hour loss limit of \$500 and is currently looking at repealing that. Arlen Siegfried, committee chair, said the committee would choose one Of the three bills to work and would debate it in the coming weeks.

MORE TOLL ROADS?

The Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT) is working on a long-range transportation plan for the state and a component of that plan may be to put tolls on other roads. In January Gov. Sebelius introduced a proposal to increase tolls on the Kansas Turnpike to help finance repairs at public universities. Sebelius proposal went nowhere with the Senate Ways and Means Committee.

The current \$13 billion, 10-year transportation plan expires in 2008, and officials are laying the groundwork for a new plan, the third plan has been funded through increases in the state fuel tax and massive borrowing.

Sensing the Legislature opposes further tax increases and is skittish about further increases in state debt, KDOT is exploring innovative sources used in other states including tolling certain roads. Kansas Transportation Secretary Deb Miller said, as we look for funding sources for the next transportation program, without question we are going to explore any and all options. Transportation projects are expensive, they are extremely important to the economic health of the communities of this state, but they don't come easy. Miller said that other states are adding tolls to more roads to help finance highway improvements, and that she would oppose simply adding a toll to an existing road unless improvements were made. It only makes sense in my mind when you're adding capacity, she said. Adding tolls has become more popular in other states to avoid tax increases, and because tolls can now be collected electronically without forcing motorists to stop to pay. According to Secretary Miller KDOT is scheduled to complete its long-range plan by the end of this year, but it probably won't be ready for legislative consideration until the 2009 session.

HEALTH CARE REFORM

Two key committees considering major health care reform are now singing the same tune. This week the Health for All Kansans Steering Committee (HAKSC) endorsed a bill draft that would have the Kansas Health Policy Authority (KHPA) analyze various health reform proposals and report its findings by November to the governor and legislative leaders. Amendments to the 2008 budget bill for age 0-5 health care and for a business health plan both failed on the House Floor yesterday. But, the good news is that

all of the representatives were able to discuss these ideas as a body. The bad news is that the public was not allowed to speak, other than through its representatives.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE STUDY

Kansas participated in the first U.S. census on domestic violence services, which revealed some Kansas specific information. These numbers are stunning, especially since we have crisis services in fewer than half the counties in Kansas-imagine what it may look like if services were easily available to all. In a single day, 564 Kansas residents sought refuge in emergency shelters; lived in transitional housing facilities; or received non-residential services such as counseling, legal advocacy and children's support groups. In addition, 248 hotline calls were answered by domestic violence advocates, which totals more than 10 hotline calls every hour. This startling data comes from today's inaugural release of "Domestic Violence Counts: the National Census of Domestic Violence Services (NCDVS)," the first-ever national one-day census on domestic violence services. Conducted by the National Network to End Domestic Violence and Harvard University researchers, the census is the most recent data documenting the number of victims who reach out for help on November 2, 2006. Sixteen of the 26 domestic violence programs (60%) in Kansas participated in the census. During the 24-hour survey period, To look at the 2006 Report

http://www.nnedv.org/census/DVCounts2006/DVCounts06_Report.pdf

NBAF TASK FORCE GOES TO WASHINGTON

Local, state and national leaders are in Washington, DC this week to help attract a proposed \$451 million, 500,000 square foot bio and agro-defense facility to Kansas. Members of the NBAF Task Force have traveled to DC to meet with select government officials from the United States Department of Agriculture and the Department of Homeland Security. Both organizations will play important roles in locating and managing the new facility. Manhattan and Leavenworth, which are the two Kansas cities under consideration, would benefit greatly if the facility were built in the area. Not only would the facility create as many as 500 high scientific federal jobs B not to mention the additional jobs it would create through additional research partnerships in the state B but the facility is estimated to bring \$3.5 billion in revenue to the state.

Members of the task force, including Rep. Jerry Williams, of Chanute, have already been coordinating community outreach programs and have been working with state agencies on the project. One of the group=s goals is to collaborate with local business leaders to outline the resources and facilities available for the project. They will also prepare an impact statement detailing how the site would affect our environment. Kansas is one of

12 states under consideration by the Department of Homeland Security for the laboratories new home. To learn more about the project or to find a full list of NBAF Task Force members, please visit www.nbafinkansas.com

TESTING MERCURY EMISSIONS PASSES HOUSE

In order to protect Kansans from potentially harmful Mercury emissions, Representatives passed legislation that will require the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) to add at least six new monitoring sites throughout the state. Two of the sites will be dedicated to testing mercury emissions entering the state by prevailing winds.

The legislation was drafted after numerous constituents became concerned about emissions that might come from three coal fired energy plants planned for construction. Two of these plants are planned near the town of Holcomb, Kan. This bill passed the House 109 to 14.

PROTECTING KANSAS CHILDREN

In 2006, a case of alleged child abuse involving two Wichita children revealed weaknesses in the state's system for protecting children. To help prevent future crimes against children, House legislators have been working with Governor Kathleen Sebelius to implement new reforms. One proposal would help create new child advocacy centers around the state. These organizations would bring law enforcement and social services organizations together under one roof to coordinate efforts to protect children. One-million dollars has already been laid out in the 2008 budget for the creation of these agencies.

In addition, a child advocacy group has been established to recommend improvements to Kansas' child welfare system. The Child Protective Services Task Force will review the state of the Kansas system to prevent child abuse. Representative Oletha Faust-Goudeau, of Wichita, has been named to the committee and to undertake a review of current Kansas law. The 13-members include legislators, child advocates, criminal justice professionals and other stakeholders. Members will be responsible for reviewing Kansas law, policies, and practices that are currently in place to protect children from abuse and neglect and are expected to make their recommendations in November 2007. To report suspected abuse or neglect of a child, please call the Child and Adult Abuse Hotline at 1-800-922-5330, the Crime Victim Referral Service at 1-800-828-9745, or the School Safety Hotline at 1-877-626-8203.

WAITING WEEK DEBATE CONTINUES

House and Senate reached a compromise on Thursday, March 15 giving employers the largest tax cut this year along with the first improvement in unemployment benefits in 30 years. If approved, it is estimated it will lower \$80 million in overhead for employers next year. It could become effective as early as April 1.

Workers who have been laid-off because a business has closed, declared bankruptcy, or their lay-off was covered under WARN Act (Worker Adjustment and Relocation Notification) will not have the one-week waiting period. For others, the waiting week will still apply, but in their fourth week of unemployment, they will receive double benefits to compensate for non-payment in the first week. The 26 weeks of benefits will remain the same and the cap remains at \$380 per week.

HOUSE PASSES BUDGET BILL

Yesterday we spent ten hours debating the budget bill. Some of the work has been done in the Appropriations Committee and the Sub committees or Budget Committees. However, much of the work has been delayed. I was pleased that the Appropriations Committee did support some important measures in Committee, but I had serious objections with the bill's inadequacy and did not vote for its passage. It will not be the last time I can vote on this bill as it will go to Conference Committee to be compared with the Senate Appropriations Bill and I will be able to vote on many of the things that were not in this bill " perhaps several more times. I objected to budget decisions that were delayed on key items such as:

- The State Employee Pay Plan is the same \$44 Million recommended by the Governor, but this one is based on one-time money in the form of a bonus. The Democrats offered an amendment to apply this bonus money to the base salary, but it failed. This means that it would not count toward KPERS. It is estimated to cost workers \$760 per year on their KPERS retirement income. And, next year, state employees could receive even less money if the bonus does not continue.
- Waiting Lists for Home and Community Based Services for the elderly and disabled.
- Did not include funding for Vocational-Technical Colleges and Community Colleges
- Health Care Solutions " were not included and attempts to add them were voted down.
- Disaster Relief funding for Western Kansas that we will have to come up with and that would bring Federal Support to Kansas.

- None of the \$3Million recommended by the Governor for Student Financial Aid for Students was added.
- No support for All Day Kindergarten (which USD 383 has decided to implement)
- Did not include the funding for Grandparents as Caregivers which was passed by the Legislature last year.

This budget bill leaves a number of very real needs unaddressed. A budget is more than an allocation of money. It is an expression of the values we hold. Wasting money on unneeded programs while failing to provide for public safety and ignoring the health needs of our senior citizens and working families does not uphold Kansas Values! WE CAN DO BETTER. The process is not finished, but the opposing votes will be noticed by the Senate when they act on our bill.

KEEP IN TOUCH

It is a special honor and privilege to serve as your voice in the Kansas House of Representatives. 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 521-S, Statehouse, Topeka, KS 66612. You can reach me at (785) 296-7651 or call the legislative hotline at 1-800-432-3924 to leave a message for me. Additionally, you can e-mail me at carlin@house.state.ks.us. You can also follow the legislative session online at www.kslegislature.org. and I will post all of my newsletters on the web site for future reference at www.sydneycarlin.com

Have a great day!

Sydney