

KNI AND PARSONS TO STAY OPEN

Governor Mark Parkinson announced that he has refused to accept the recommendations of a legislative closure commission concerning the Kansas Neurological Institute (KNI) in Topeka and Parsons State Hospital.

The Governor has issued an executive order to begin a phased reduction of KNI and Parsons, with the possibility that one of the institutions will be closed in three or four years. SRS will also begin profiling residents who can successfully transition into community services. Consolidation of the facilities is contingent upon successfully moving and keeping individuals in community service programs.

The phased reduction was the best solution for KNI and Parsons residents, their family members, caretakers, and our community. To view the Governor's executive order regarding KNI and Parsons, please visit <http://governor.ks.gov/issues-a-initiatives/executive-orders/568-executive-order-10-1>

SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF AND THE SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND

The Facilities Realignment and Closure Commission also recommended that the School for the Blind in Kansas City, Kansas and the School for the Deaf in Olathe work together to combine administrative and operational activities resulting in a savings of \$400,000 per year. The Governor endorsed that proposal. In addition, The School for the Blind in Topeka will be closed and services for the clients will be delivered in the client's home and community.



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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.

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.

WHAT?????

Many of you have heard about the lawsuit against the state which has been filed by the Speaker of the House, attorney Mike O'Neal. The suit comes as a result of last year's appropriations bill that transferred funds out of some fee based budgets. He also asks that the court order allow "reasonable attorney's fees to be paid from the respective funds restored, and for such other and further relief as the Court may deem just and equitable." Remember, O'Neal is on the record repeatedly as claiming that the school districts did not have the right to sue for state funding.

According to the Topeka Capital-Journal, Democrats in both houses question whether O'Neal can effectively preside over the House as this year's Legislature tries to cut state spending while he is representing clients in a lawsuit seeking repayment of as much as \$5 million from the state. House Minority Leader Rep. Paul Davis said there is consideration of filing an ethics complaint in the House.

KANSAS WORKERS RALLY FOR WORKER'S COMP REFORM

Workman's Compensation has not been adjusted in Kansas for 23 years. If a worker is injured on the job, he or she can only claim a maximum of \$125,000 in disability benefits, no matter how serious the injury or how high the medical bills. Even if the injured worker is disabled at a young age for the remainder of his life, he is capped at \$125,000.

Senate Bill 258 would require the Secretary of Labor to adjust the current workers compensation caps to meet the Midwest cost-of-living adjustment. The state's current statutory limits – which have been in place since 1987 – limit a worker who has suffered a permanent total disability to a \$125,000 cap and a worker who has suffered a partial or temporary total disability to a \$100,000 cap. SB 547 would raise compensation caps, require that weekly compensation be paid to an in-

jured who has suffered a partial or permanent total disability in a sum equal to 75% of the average workers gross weekly wage, and would also allow injured workers to choose their health care provider.

In a legislative session that will yield very few positive results for the people of Kansas, we have the opportunity to recognize the dignity and worth of our state's injured workers and their families by increasing the state's statutory cap on workers compensation.

Working families have been hit the hardest during this recession. This is something we can do to really help ease the pain. A poor economic climate is no excuse for letting workers compensation remain broken for a 24th year.