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Manhattan Shred-a-thon 2009: Protect yourself from Identity Theft

Every year, thousands of Kansans fall victim to identity theft. As your Attorney General, Steve Six is determined to protect Kansas families from these scams.

The best way to defeat identity theft is by protecting your personal information. That is why the Attorney General is sponsoring a **Manhattan Shred-a-thon** for local residents to securely dispose of sensitive documents. There will also be representatives from his office ready to answer your questions.

What: Manhattan Shred-a-thon

Date: March 5th

Time: 11:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

Location: Walmart, 101 E. Bluemont

What to Bring: Old financial, credit card & tax documents

Identity theft can turn your life up-side down. Protect yourself and your family by taking advantage of this free opportunity.

[Visit the Attorney General's website to learn more about identity theft and consumer protection.](#)

Keeping your personal information from falling into the wrong hands is the most important step in securing your identity.

At the Statehouse

I was happy to have Joe Haug and Sam Livsay come to page for me in the Capitol last week. And I also enjoyed having lunch with Riley County 4H members.

Gov Sebelius accepts Cabinet position

I am very proud of Governor Kathleen Sebelius for being the kind of great leader that can be asked to become a member of President Obama's cabinet. She has always worked well with our Congressional Delegation and has the ability to work through tough issues and help to find long term solutions. The Health and Human Services issues require the knowledge, skills and compassion she will bring to create needed change to America's health care system. While I regret seeing her leave the Statehouse, I am thrilled that the state of Kansas has provided such an exceptional leader to take on these challenges.

State Finance Council dispute put state payroll in jeopardy

The State General Fund endures financial peaks and valleys throughout the year. To address this, the state has the ability to shift money from one account to another, essentially "borrowing" money from itself for operational expenses (such as state payroll) until revenues recover, which is usually after people pay income taxes in April.

When the State Finance Council meeting was cancelled at the last minute, many Kansans were concerned about payroll checks and tax refunds. Once the Governor signed the FY2009 Budget cut bill, a second meeting of the State Finance Council was called. During the meeting, the legislative leaders approved the certificates, allaying the fears of Kansas employees.

Holcomb Coal Debate Returns in HB 2014

HB2014 passed on Final Action facing almost certain governor veto. Governor

Sebelius characterized the so-called “green” provisions in HB 2014 as “Olive Brown”. She asserts that it is a step backward for Kansas and wants policy makers to focus on wind energy and other alternative fuels – a fit with the state’s strengths and the Obama administration’s environmental goals. I opposed the bill.

I supported an amendment offered by Cindy Neighbor, D-Shawnee, that would have gutted the bill and replaced it with an energy package endorsed by the Governor. It would have solidified the authority of state regulators (Kansas Corporation Commission and the Kansas Department of Health and Environment) to weigh potential health risks of carbon dioxide emissions when evaluating proposals for new coal plants. Unregulated coal plant construction in Kansas would undermine the state’s ability to secure millions of dollars in federal support for renewable energy sources. Neighbor’s amendment would have altered the “net metering” element of the underlying bill to allow people with wind turbines or solar collectors to send excess power onto the electrical grid; and, Kansans could add or draw from their utility accounts throughout the year. The amendment failed. Another amendment was successful (66-53) and is now part of the House position. It prohibits cities, counties and property associations from blocking homeowners from placing solar panels on the roof of a house.

House Passes Drivers’ License Changes

HB2143 This is a major change in requirements for obtaining a drivers license for teenagers. There is a longer period for learners’ permits and restricted licenses. The administration asserts that adopting this system would lead to a substantial decrease of crashes for 16 and 17 year olds—anywhere between 20 and 50 percent.

To find out more information about this bill, refer to:
www.kslegislature.org/legsrv-billSubj/index.do then type in 2143.

House Approves Higher Education Bills

HB 2197 changes responsibility for setting university admission standards from the state legislature to the State Board of Regents. Most states let their Board of Regents set standards. It allows the Board to be more responsive to the changing education environment. For example, it allows them to admit more students from home schools and private schools than they are allowed to admit today.

HB2007 allows the Board of Regents to administer certain scholarships and fellowships and to waive certain fees and tuition to undergraduate students. It will be an extremely helpful tool for advancing the state’s educational mission, promoting workforce development, increasing enrollment, and encouraging diversity on state campuses.

HB2004 will change some of our Board of Regents employee retirement wording in order to align with the new federal tax code. Essentially, the bill prohibits a participant in the retirement plan at the State Board of Regents from continuing to opt into the BOR retirement plan when taking a leave of absence from their educational institution to work in the executive branch of Kansas government.

Second Count Date for Military K-12

HB2002 In 2005, I authored a bill to extend a second count date for districts with more than 25 military students, or 1% of the school’s population, transferring mid-year. The law had a sunset date in 2007 that was later extended to 2009. If the bill passes the Senate, the sunset date will be extended until 2013.

To date USD 383 has received over 1150 new military students since 2005. Over 140 students enrolled in USD 383 between Sept. 20 and Feb. 20 of 2009. The second count requires the state to send the State Aid Per Pupil for those students so that teachers, supplies and classrooms can be provided.

New District Maps Drawn

Kansas Legislative leaders have put forward a bi-partisan proposal aimed at removing political brawling from the redistricting process. The state redistricts legislative, state board of education and congressional districts after the census every ten years. The next census is 2010. There is a software program that can create districts with the proper number of people. Under the proposal, legislative staff would have specific criteria to consider when drawing district lines, and one of those would be to keep communities of interest intact. Once the district maps are drawn, the Legislature would vote for or against the proposed districts. It would be in place for the 2012 elections.

FY 2009 Budget Finalized

Final cuts in the FY 2009 budget totaled approximately \$300 million and should fill the budget gap we face in the current fiscal year. Governor Sebelius issued several line item vetoes on the FY 2009 budget.

Because a \$66 base state aid per pupil reduction would have had a devastating impact on Kansas schools so late in the school year, the Governor adjusted the cut to \$33 base state aid per pupil. She also preserved \$4.5 million in special education money, which is a requirement to receive federal stimulus money.

Governor Offers FY2010 Budget Amendments

Governor's Budget Amendments (GBAs) are offered during the budget process prior to the final Omnibus bill as state revenue projections change from the time the budget is first drafted until the time it is finalized. Since the FY2010 process began we have seen the passage of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act which allows us to stabilize the State General Fund, continue education funding at the higher level between 2008 and 2009 funding, and protect our ending balance. This gives us the flexibility to proceed with the Governor's recommended FY2010 budget while protecting jobs and avoiding deeper cuts in the budget. The Governor's recommended FY2010 budget cuts an additional \$600 Million (below FY2009 totals) for total cuts to date of over \$900 Million in FY2009 and FY2010 spending.

Federal Stimulus (ARRA)

There has been a great deal of focus on the Federal Stimulus Bill signed into law by President Obama. This bill will offer a great deal of assistance to Kansas, since we face a \$1 billion budget shortfall. Below is a description of some aid our state is set to receive.

Medicaid Reimbursement

Reimbursement has increased from 60% to 66.2% of our costs for the time period of Oct. 1, 2008 to June 30, 2011, allowing us to receive an additional \$103 Million in FY2009, \$200 Million in FY2010 and \$102 Million in FY2011 if Kansas maintains current eligibility standards. The new Federal funding will directly offset planned State General Fund appropriations, freeing up money to support our schools and our most vulnerable citizens. Our first check for over \$70 Million has already been received.

Tax Cuts

This act provides a tax cut of up to \$800 for working Kansans and their families. It also expands the child tax credit and provides a new tax credit for families. It helps first-time home buyers. It provides incentive to buy new cars by creating a tax deduction for State and local sales taxes made on the purchase. It helps business by enabling them to quickly recover costs of new capital investments. It also creates new jobs with tax credits for hiring veterans and certain youth.

Transportation

Kansas will receive an estimated \$350 million under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 for highway construction projects that will create or sustain thousands of jobs and make important improvements to the state's transportation system. In addition, Kansas will receive an estimated \$27 million to be spent on transit projects throughout the state. Included is the initial phase of expanding K-18 between Fort Riley and Manhattan to four lanes. Based on estimates from the Federal Highway Administration, Kansas stands to gain more than 10,000 jobs from these projects.

To see how businesses can bid on state contracts, go to: www.governor.ks.gov/recovery

Education

Kansas will receive increased funding in a State Fiscal Stabilization Fund, distributed in part to local school districts using existing funding formulas, which can be used for preventing cutbacks, preventing layoffs, school modernization, or other purposes, as bonus grants for meeting key performance measures in education, and to states for other high priority needs such as public safety and other critical services, which may include education.

The stimulus provides increased funding for Early Head Start and Head Start, which provide comprehensive development services to low-income infants and preschool children, and increases funding for the Kansas Child Care Development Block Grant to provide child care services to additional children in low-income families while their parents go to work.

The act also increases the maximum Pell Grant by \$500, and adds \$200 million to the vital College Work-Study program.

Dale Dennis from the Kansas Department of Education testified to the Senate Education Committee that the federal stimulus package may have \$563 million for Kansas schools over 3 years, if the state meets "maintenance of effort" standards that are starting to become clearer from the federal government.

Energy

The economic recovery bill provides a total of \$30 billion for such initiatives as a new, smart power grid, advanced battery technology, and energy efficiency measures, which will create nearly 500,000 jobs across the country and funds the Smart Grid Investment Program to modernize the electricity grid to make it more efficient and reliable. The legislation also provides tax incentives to spur energy savings and green jobs, including \$20 billion in tax incentives for renewable energy and energy efficiency over the next 10 years, a three-year extension of the production tax credit (PTC) for electricity derived from wind (through 2012) and for electricity derived from biomass, geothermal, hydropower, landfill gas, waste-to-energy, and marine facilities (through 2013). \$5 billion has been provided to improve the energy efficiency of more than 1 million modest-income homes through weatherization across the country. This will save modest-income families on average \$350 per year on their heating and air conditioning bills. The bill also provides funding for increasing energy efficiency in federally-supported housing programs.

Lt. Governor launches new web site on economic stimulus

Lieutenant Governor Mark Parkinson announced a new website to help Kansans take advantage of the federal stimulus package.

Website, www.governor.ks.gov/recovery, currently focuses on five specific areas:

House Bills I Supported

HB2009 puts a one year time limit during which a defendant can withdraw a guilty or no contest plea. There are provisions where if new evidence is found (i.e., DNA), a defendant can ask for a plea to be reviewed. This bill is an attempt to balance defendants' and victims' rights.

HB2125 allows the Register of Deeds to check for payment of delinquent taxes when re-platting properties. This will keep consumers safe from an ugly surprise if they buy a property with unpaid taxes.

HB2126 requires telecommunications providers to provide call location information in emergency situations for cell phone calls.

HB2142 changes some of the requirements for licensing for plumbers, electricians, mechanical, and heating and air contractors. It provides universal acceptance of a technical worker's continuing education if it is accepted in one city, among other changes.

HB2147 is also known as the "move it law." It would require the driver of a vehicle involved in an accident which obstructs the flow of traffic to remove the vehicle if it is possible to do so safely. Exemptions are for cases of death, serious injury or hazardous materials. This will take effect until July 1, 2010 so that there will be time for the public to get the word.

HB2171 provides for the Kansas Commission on Veterans' Affairs to create a Vietnam War Era Medallion Program for eligible veterans.

HB2172 makes the current law to pay sales tax on the price of a car after the rebate was removed, lowering the cost of a car. This bill makes the current law permanent.

HB2201 allows the court to remove the professional license of someone who fails to pay child support or fails to make payment arrangements for child support.

HB2221 allows parents more access to requests for information about child care providers so they can make better choices in providers.

HB2292 with increased instances of identity theft, this allows you to put a freeze on your credit report, before someone destroys your credit rating.

House member introduces first bills before being deployed to Iraq

HB 2308 & 2267

New Representative Melanie Meier was elected of Ft. Leavenworth. Just weeks in to her first term, she received orders to report for active duty on February 22. She carried her first bills on the House floor:

HB 2308 requires the Attorney General's Office to assign a unique number for active duty military applicants who do not have a Kansas driver's license or Kansas identification card for use on their concealed carry license card.

HB2267 requires confirmation by the Senate for all persons appointed to the Kansas Commission on Veteran's Affairs. It also requires appointees to show proof of their honorable discharge from military service.

Bill lost that I voted for

HB 2193 as amended would have required third parties involved in elections to file financial reports. I believe you have a right to know who is trying to influence your vote.

Bills that passed the Senate

1. **Mandatory seat belt law:** Today you cannot be stopped solely for not wearing a seat belt. Under this bill you could be stopped for not wearing a seat belt with no other offense.
2. **Minimum wage:** the minimum wage in Kansas would be raised to the federal wage of \$7.25. Those working in jobs where they earn tips would be in a different category and employers would have to show they make \$7.25 including tips. Right now in Kansas about 19,000 people work for a wage less than \$5 per hour. Our current Kansas minimum wage is \$2.65 per hour.
3. **Statewide smoking ban:** Bans smoking in most public places, exempting only private clubs, casinos, cigar bars, and designated rooms in hotels and motels.

Save Postage and Paper!

You can receive my weekly newsletter during the session by requesting it at:

Sydney.Carlin@house.ks.gov

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 L79, Docking State Office Building, Topeka, KS 66612. You can reach me at (785) 296-7523 or call the legislative hotline at 1-800-432-3924 to leave a message for me. Visit my website at www.sydneycarlin.com.

You can also follow the legislative session online at www.kslegislature.org.