

Legislative Newsletter January 25, 2010

Hi All,

We are beginning our third week of session and as most of you know the budget is the hottest topic. In every committee policies on how to make a particular function of the government more efficient or more self sufficient is a high priority starting with cutting the legislator's pay and perks. There have been various scenarios suggested from a five day furlough to a five percent pay cut to cutting the money we use to send mail to constituents in half from about \$120 per year to \$60. There are some suggesting we do all three and frankly I am okay with that. We need to step forward and share the pain as well. Since we are paid about \$8000 per year, if we did it all it would amount to a little over 10% pay cut. We are currently waiting to hear what leadership in the house and senate are agreeing to do. Stay tuned on that score.

I am currently on the Education, Government Efficiency as well as the House Corrections and Juvenile Justice Committees. Each is looking for ways to make our systems more efficient. If there is an upside to the downturn in the economy this is it. I am on the policy making committee not the budget committee in education and it is here that we decide, not how much money to spend, but how it should be allocated. For example, the legislature decided that each district should get 92% of the excess costs of special education spent in each district. However, since the money is distributed, not on those actual dollars, but on an entirely different system, some district are getting over 200% of their excess costs paid and some districts as diverse as Blue Valley, Shawnee Mission, Garden City, Kansas City, Salina and Wichita are getting much less than that (down to 57% for Blue Valley). As far as I know that was never the intention of the legislature. Their attempt to 'equalize' between rich and poor districts no longer holds water and needs to be remedied. I will introduce a bill to do just that. Once again stay tuned.

In the Government Efficiency Committee I have introduced a bill to allow local entities, ie school districts and cities, to be able to save money on their bond funds. A similar bill was introduced last year in the senate but never reached the house committee. We will see if we have any luck here. The problem is that some legislators see this as a loss for local banks even though it adds extra costs and they believe that local businesses trump efficiency. We each vote our own

districts and you really can't fault legislators for listening to constituents, however, that is how governments continue to be inefficient.

In the House Corrections and Juvenile Justice Committee we have had a series of bills like those dealing with the latest reinvention of marijuana which our sheriff has asked us to make illegal. In a discussion of a different bill we heard horror stories of stalking by those deemed mentally ill while committing crimes and being let out to stalk their victims again. The new bill mandates notification by SRS to the previous victims and families which previously could not be done because of privacy laws. We have also looked at ways of getting more money into the Justice system and one area suggested was to raise fees on DUI convictions where the money would go to diversion programs which have turned out to be effective and save money.

Since I last wrote I have been busy meeting with constituents and constituent groups on various topics which include:

- Students involved in Leadership 2020 from Wyandotte and Johnson County.
- Kansas Association of Community Foundations.
- Overland Park Chamber.
- Senior Citizen groups on aging.
- Blue Valley school board and staff.
- Superintendants of Johnson County.
- Autism Council's informational meeting on Kate's Law.

- Working Healthy program which supports the developmentally and physically disabled to get back into the workplace. For more information www.workinghealthy.org
- Medical technology in homes to allow seniors to 'age in place' for more information m.coffman@windsorplace.net

As always it is a pleasure to serve you. If I may be of assistance on any issue please call **785-296-7614** or email me at Sheryl.Spalding@House.ks.gov

Thank you,

Representative Sheryl Spalding

District 29

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ps You get a more direct and quicker response by using my personal email address. Also, please feel free to forward this newsletter to anyone you believe may be interested. If you received this as a forwarded message and would like to be included on the newsletter list, please email me at spaldingboe@aol.com . As ever if you wish to discontinue getting these newsletters, please let me know and I will take you off the list.

FYI: The legislative hotline number available to all Kansas constituents is 800-432-3924. You may use this toll free number to leave messages for legislators and gain access to legislative activity and documents.