

LEGISLATIVE NEWSLETTER END OF SESSION, MAY 2010

Hi All,

It is no secret that this year was a tumultuous one for the legislature, not just here but across the United States. While we had very difficult decisions to make, we seem to be in much better shape than many others. Partly that was because last year we prudently cut \$1 billion dollars out of a \$6 billion dollar budget. It was painful, but it had to be done. This year was even more difficult, as the budget projections showed a \$500 million dollar gap, a large part of which was the reduction of federal dollars this next year for K-12 education and higher ed.

It is interesting to note that over the last 15 years we have cut taxes here in Kansas as we have taken in more money than needed. If we had kept property and car taxes at 1995 levels we would be bringing in over \$690 million dollars more every year. State income taxes have been reduced over \$390 million per year from 1995 levels including nearly \$48 million dollars of food rebate taxes. The inheritance and estate taxes are being phased out and are now \$170 million below 1995 levels. Those three categories of taxes represent over \$1 billion per year we are no longer collecting in taxes at the state level.

In the end, the Legislature approved a combination of spending cuts and a temporary three year increase to our state sales tax rate from 5.3% to 6.3%. This helped us preserve services to the frail and elderly, the developmentally disabled, our public schools, colleges and universities as well as to our safety budgets which includes prisons and law enforcement.

Also, this session gave us opportunities to tighten safety laws, create a comprehensive transportation plan and create jobs.

TRAFFIC LAWS

We passed a primary seat belt law meaning you can be stopped for not wearing a seat belt. The first two years the fine is \$5 and no court costs, the minimum allowed by federal law. This allows us to access \$11 million per year in federal money. We also passed the no texting while driving law and increased the penalty for a second DUI.

TRANSPORTATION PLAN

We also passed a ten year transportation plan. This is an investment in our state's infrastructure such as maintenance of pavements, bridge conditions, road safety and congestion. This is especially important for Johnson County and will bring hundreds of good paying jobs to the state which many believe to be the fastest way to economic recovery. After 2013 .4 of a cent of the state's sales tax will support the plan.

Since I last wrote I have:

Worked with school district administrators about school funding.
Met with a great boy scout troop for a question and answer session.
Spoke in front of the Greater KC Chamber Kansas State Affairs Committee.
Talked to the Overland Park Chamber's Government Affairs Committee.

Join a Discussion of the Federal Budget

Speaking of budgets, would you like the chance to participate in a national conversation about the federal budget? Consensus is working with the Johnson County Library to invite citizens to participate in an AmericaSpeaks National Town Meeting on June 26th.

The event with 18 sites all over the country is designed to include people from different political perspectives and walks of life. They will register participants for the Johnson County forum in the same proportions of Democrats, Republicans and Independents as identified by the county election commission to assure that the conversation reflects the county's perspective.

You will join Americans at meeting halls across the country linked together by live video and the internet to let them know what we think. The National Town Meeting is our chance to learn about the issues, find common ground, and present your priorities to leaders in Washington. What: National Town Meeting When: June 26, 2010 Where: Johnson County.

Register today at [USABudgetDiscussion.org](http://usabudgetdiscussion.org)

<http://usabudgetdiscussion.org/participate> Participation is free, but seating is limited. The national discussion is being made possible by grants from the Peter G. Peterson Foundation, John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation and the W. K. Kellogg Foundation.

As always it is a pleasure to serve you. If I may be of assistance on any issue please email me at spaldingboe@aol.com.

Thank you,
Representative Sheryl Spalding
District 29

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