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- Find unclaimed property:
www.kansascash.com
- Learn more about KPERs:
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- Learn about unemployment:
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- National Do Not Call Registry:
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Dear Constituent:
 Thank you for the opportunity to serve you in the 29th District of the Kansas House of Representatives. Representing you has been my great honor, and I will continue to work hard to maintain your trust. Although this session was a difficult one, with large cuts to basic services like education, we passed a number of bills that will have a positive impact on Kansans. This newsletter provides a broad overview of the major pieces of legislation passed during this session. Hundreds of other bills were debated and voted on by the Senate, the House, or both, but never completed the process. Your input is critical to the decisions I make as your State Representative. If you have questions about these or any other legislative issues, please do not hesitate to contact me by phone, email, or USPS.
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Rep. Sheryl Spalding

Legislative Update



Rep. Spalding with graduates from the Accelerated School

The 2012 Kansas Budget

You have likely heard politicians and others talking about excessive spending that leads to deficits, debt and higher taxes. While these complaints may be legitimate for the federal government, they are misleading at the state level. Passing a budget that does not balance is not an option in Kansas, per the state's constitution.

This year the legislature took almost \$500 million shortfall and turned it into a balanced budget with a \$70 million cushion. While we have found ways to be more efficient by consolidating various state functions, most of these cuts were due to millions in K-12 and social service cuts.

Our schools had another \$75 Base State Aid Per Pupil (BSAPP) stripped at the end of this current year and will lose another \$157 BSAPP next year as well. That

means in one stroke the legislature cut schools by about 6%. For Olathe and Shawnee Mission that means they each lost over \$8 million. Blue Valley lost nearly \$6.5 million. Over the last three years the state has reduced its share of the school budgets by about \$650 BSAPP. I voted against the FY12 budget because the bottom line cost our Johnson County schools too much while we could get very little passed to make the school finance formula more equitable to our schools.

On a positive note, I was glad this year's budget maintained funding for Parents as Teachers, HeadStart programs and an engineering initiative that will expand engineering programs at KU, K-State, and Wichita State, aimed at educating Kansas students, bringing valued science-based jobs, and keeping our best and brightest right here in Kansas.

Keeping Our Promise to State Employees

The Kansas Public Employee Retirement System (KPERs) is a commitment Kansas made to state employees, recognizing they are often paid below market value for similar private sector jobs, but with the promise of a pension following decades of service to our state. Thousands of KPERs retirees benefit from the system and thousands more are currently enrolled in the program. You likely have a friend, family member, or neighbor who is living or counting on this retirement program. Due to decreasing investments and increasing retirees, the system has become insolvent and is shouldering a nearly \$8 billion unfunded liability, meaning it owes more than it has or makes.

Many would like to see KPERs migrate to a defined contribution plan (401K-style) instead of a defined benefit plan (pension), and many others have legitimate concerns, especially considering what the recession did to many 401K accounts. To address these issues, the

legislature created a commission to study the various models of state employee retirement benefit plans. The commission must submit their recommendations to the legislature by January 2012 and the House or Senate is required to vote on the recommendations during the next session. I will keep you updated should there be a fundamental shift in the state's commitment to its employees.

In an attempt to stop the bleeding and help reduce the debt in the current system, the House and Senate also agreed to expand benefits to those KPERs enrollees who are willing to pay more into the system now. If an employee chooses to increase their contribution now, they reap greater benefits later. However, if an employee chooses to maintain the lower current contribution amount, their benefits will be lower than originally planned upon retirement. None of these provisions impact current KPERs retirees.

In This Issue

- Keeping Promises P.1
- Jobs & Businesses P.2
- Protecting Kansans P.3
- A Letter from Sheryl P.4



Protecting Businesses & Workers

In record time, the House passed a very good bill to protect both workers and businesses from worker's compensation claims. The bill provides employers a credit against an employee's pre-existing condition so employers are only paying for the portion of the injury incurred on-the-job. Additionally, the permanent partial, total disability, and functional impairment caps are increased and the death benefit is raised. Under the bill, employees are compensated for the injury without having to prove fault or negligence of the employer.

With less than 20 minutes of debate in committee and no opponents to the bill, many of us who have worked on this issue for a number of years are still stunned at the swiftness of passage and are pleased labor and business came together in advance of the session to draft a compromise bill.

Economic Development Produces Kansas Jobs

The legislature has worked diligently with Governor Brownback this year to help businesses grow and add more Kansas jobs - recognizing every business, every innovation, and every entrepreneur matters.

First, because our state's economy expands as businesses purchase equipment and software to support their growth, we have taken action to allow businesses to immediately "expense" such purchases for tax purposes (rather than requiring a prescribed schedule of smaller deductions over multiple years). This will put an estimated \$47 million to \$50 million back into the Kansas economy per year, which can be used for other purposes such as job creation, wage increases, and investments.

Second, we made improvements to the High Performance Incentive Program (HPIP) and Promoting Employment Across Kansas (PEAK) programs, which provide tax incentives to employers who create jobs with above-average salaries and retain jobs that could be recruited to another state. Both of these programs are widely used in Johnson County and are crucial pieces to the economic incentive packages that help us retain businesses.

Third, we created **Rural Opportunity Zones** in 50 counties in which population has dramatically dropped over the past decade. Individuals who move from out of state into these opportunity zones will pay no state income tax for five years, and college graduates may qualify for assistance repaying up to \$15,000 of their student loans over five

years. We hope these Rural Opportunity Zones will encourage many people and businesses to put down roots right here in Kansas and breathe new life into areas that have struggled for too long.

Please pass this along to your friends and family that might be interested in a return to Oz! The counties included are: Barber, Chautauqua, Cheyenne, Clark, Cloud, Comanche, Decatur, Edwards, Elk, Gove, Graham, Greeley, Greenwood, Hamilton, Harper, Hodgeman, Jewell, Kearny, Kingman, Kiowa, Lane, Lincoln, Logan, Marion, Mitchell, Morton, Ness, Norton, Osborne, Pawnee, Phillips, Pratt, Rawlins, Republic, Rooks, Rush, Russell, Scott, Sheridan, Sherman, Smith, Stafford, Stanton, Trego, Thomas, Wallace, Washington, Wichita, Wilson and Woodson.



Protecting Kansas Voters

You have probably reached for your ID when approaching your polling location - I know I have. It seems like your ID to do just about anything these days, except vote. Until now. As of January 1, 2012, voting will require a valid photo ID and those registering to vote after January 1, 2013 will be required to present proof of US citizenship. If you do not have a valid ID (driver's license, student ID, military ID, passport, concealed carry license, public assistance ID, among others), you can apply for a free one for voting purposes. Additionally, if you register to vote following January 1, 2013 and do not have a birth certificate for proof of citizenship - upon proof of having been born in the United States - a birth certificate will be provided at no cost. In both instances, you must sign an affidavit verifying you need the documents for voting purposes. This is a very complicated bill and I encourage you to read the fine print here: http://kslegislature.org/li/b2011_12/year1/measure/documents/supp_note_hb2067_04_0000.pdf



Transportation

With both Nebraska and Oklahoma boasting higher speed limits, a 75-mph speed limit has been enacted for selected four-lane divided highways in Kansas. This bill will help us compete for traffic and retail business when drivers stop for gas, sundry items, and hopefully visit one of our many attractions along I-70 and I-35.

Public Safety

In our current system, DUI offenses can slip through the cracks. While multiple offenders are often required to have an ignition interlock device on their vehicle, a bill was passed that will require an interlock for first-time DUI convictions.

GOOD NEWS!

May Tax Receipts Far Exceed Estimates

The economy may be turning around here in Kansas. Our tax receipts were \$47 million over estimates this month, increasing our ending state balance for the year to over \$100 million dollars. This should make it possible to get through the rest of this year without further cuts to basic services like public safety, education and help for the disabled.

Reapportionment

The committee that will redraw the state's four Congressional, 40 State Senate, and 125 State Representative districts will begin meeting this summer. The maps they propose will be available for viewing at town hall meetings through-



Rep. Spalding meeting with engineers from the Kansas Society of Professional Engineers

out the state prior to the start of the 2012 legislative session. Johnson County gained nearly 100,000 residents since the 2000 census and I expect that will earn us another 3-4 House and 1-2 Senate seats. I will keep you updated as these maps travel through our area. More Johnson County Representatives and Senators will have a greater impact for our interests in Topeka.

Help Me Keep In Touch With You!

Through the use of technology, I can provide more affordable and frequent updates through my email newsletter. To subscribe, drop me an email at: spaldingboe@aol.com to sign up. I look forward to keeping you up to date on the legislative activities affecting your home, family, and job.

