



Capitol Briefing



My Committees
Taxation
Transportation
Education Budget

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Gene Rardin
Representative 16th District

Public Forum Schedule Announced

You are invited to join a number of your local legislators, including Senator Tim Owens and myself for public forums being held in the Overland Park Matt Ross Community Center (8101 Marty Street, Overland Park, KS 66204) from 10:00-12:00 a.m. on **January 30th**, February 27th, March 27th and April 24th, 2010. Agenda items to be determined.

Session News Week 1: January 11-15, 2010

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- [From the Statehouse](#) On Monday, January 11, the Kansas Legislature convened for the 2010 legislative session. Although we have experienced challenges in the past, the current financial crisis is by far the most severe situation we have faced since the Great Depression. Even after five rounds of crippling budget cuts, revenues are still too low to keep the state operating at current funding levels. A \$400 million shortfall is anticipated
- [Governor Parkinson's State of the State](#) On Monday, January 11th, Governor Mark Parkinson delivered an extremely unique State of the State address. In the few short months since he's held the office, Governor Parkinson has proved time and time again that he does business differently from any governor we've had in the past. He has no use for partisan politics. During a year of unprecedented economic challenges, this is both refreshing and appreciated.
- [FY 2011 budget debate begins](#) As you probably already know, Kansas, like many other states across the nation, is entangled in a terrible financial crisis. State revenues have declined four straight years; this has never happened before. There have been five rounds of state budget cuts in the last 18 months, equaling a total spending cut of \$1 billion. Unfortunately, we haven't yet hit bottom. The consensus revenue estimating group is predicting yet another \$400 million shortfall in the next fiscal year.
- [Public safety a big concern in budget discussions](#) As we talk about funding cuts and filling the budget gap, I am particularly concerned with the impact of these cuts on public safety. I asked the Department of Corrections to share information with me regarding the specific impact these cuts have had on local communities and the Kansas corrections system as a whole. Department officials indicate that the next round of cuts will mean early release of prisoners (there is no statutory authority for this early release) or dramatic reductions in the intensity of parole supervision. These program cuts would have the most immediate and apparent impact on public safety in Kansas, as it would mean offenders out of prison early and in your community with less supervision.
- [Paging Opportunities](#) If you know a student from age 12-18 who would like to page in the Kansas House, contact my office to inquire about opportunities. I currently have openings on February 3rd and March 23rd.
- [In Memoriam Juanita Rardin](#) As many of you know, my wife and best friend for 45 years, Juanita, died this past August.

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From The Statehouse: Week 1

On Monday, January 11, the Kansas Legislature convened for the 2010 legislative session. Although we have experienced challenges in the past, the current financial crisis is by far the most severe situation we have faced since the Great Depression. Even after five rounds of crippling budget cuts, revenues are still too low to keep the state operating at current funding levels. A \$400 million shortfall is anticipated.

The next few weeks will be extremely busy as bills are introduced and committees begin their work. Complete daily calendars are available at www.kslegislature.org along with other useful information.

I am privileged and honored to be your voice in the Kansas Capitol. If I can ever be of assistance to you, please feel free to contact me at home or in Topeka.

Governor Parkinson's State of the State

On Monday, January 11th, Governor Mark Parkinson delivered an extremely unique State of the State address. In the few short months since he's held the office, Governor Parkinson has proved time and time again that he does business differently from any governor we've had in the past. He has no use for partisan politics. During a year of unprecedented economic challenges, this is both refreshing and appreciated.

In his speech, Governor Parkinson outlined his legislative agenda and a specific FY 2011 budget proposal. Included in his budget recommendations was a revenue package. Although discussions about taxes are never popular, Governor Parkinson proposed a budget that he believes will see this state through this financial crisis in the most responsible way possible. After one week and one proposal, it is premature to throw support behind or fully reject any proposal. However, Governor Parkinson made it very clear that he is open to new ideas and I look forward to working with him and my other colleagues to find the best solution possible.

The Governor also outlined a 2010 legislative agenda. He is in support of a statewide clean indoor air act, which gained significant traction in the Legislature last session and has been supported by a growing number of cities and counties across the state. Additionally, he announced the creation of a statewide task force to further grow green jobs in Kansas. Finally, he announced his support for the establishment of a "Rainy Day" fund, which would require the state to set surplus money aside in good economic times, helping avoid budget shortfalls such as the one we currently face. I will have more information on these initiatives throughout the session as we move through the committee process.

FY 2011 Budget Debate Begins

As you probably already know, Kansas, like many other states across the nation, is entangled in a terrible financial crisis. State revenues have declined four straight years; this has never happened before. There have been five rounds of state budget cuts in the last 18 months, equaling a total spending cut of \$1 billion. Unfortunately, we haven't yet hit bottom. The consensus revenue estimating group is predicting yet another \$400 million shortfall in the next fiscal year.

An occasional review and trimming of state government services and programs is both healthy and necessary. It is critical that we be responsible stewards of taxpayer dollars. However, we are long past the point of "trimming the fat." An additional \$400 million in cuts to state services would severely impact every Kansas citizen. This is about public school teachers being laid off, your child in a classroom with 33 other students, offenders released early from prison and with no supervision, skyrocketing tuition for college students, to name a few. These are not abstract "what ifs" on the distant horizon. This is where we are today.

Among his budget recommendations, which received mixed reviews, Governor Parkinson proposed a 1% sales tax increase and a tobacco tax increase as a means of partially filling the budget hole. It is important to note that this budget proposal would not increase state spending. The \$1 billion in cuts enacted last year will stay in place. The revenue package he presented this week is only a means of maintaining current funding.

No matter what passes or fails, I appreciate our governor's effort to keep this focused on Kansans, not on political gain. I only hope that everyone on both sides of the aisle will follow Governor Parkinson's lead and leave politics out of this mess. Tough choices are inevitable, so let's be willing to keep open minds and have honest, fact-based discussions. There is always a lot of give and take in this process. I believe we owe it to Kansans to give every proposal a fair examination, even if it is something we are not inclined to support.

Ultimately, you elected me to make reasonable decisions that protect our communities and grow our economy. That's what I'm here to do. In that effort, I am willing to give every proposal fair consideration. Governor Parkinson's proposed budget is a good starting point for this discussion, but we are a long way from a final package.

Public Safety a Big Concern

As we talk about funding cuts and filling the budget gap, I am particularly concerned with the impact of these cuts on public safety. I asked the Department of Corrections to share information with me regarding the specific impact these cuts have had on local communities and the Kansas corrections system as a whole.

In an effort to lessen the impact of reduced funding, the Department prioritized the cuts based on their impact to public safety. First to go were things that had no immediate impact, specifically surplus beds at three small facilities which were closed. Then the Department cut those things that had the next-to-least immediate impact, such as programs or facilities serving lower risk offenders (boot camps and the remaining small minimum facilities), or those things where the impact would be felt further out (such as some education and treatment programming). The Department tried to retain staff in whom they had invested a great deal of training and skill development because they estimated it would take at least five years to recruit new staff, train them and get them to the same skill levels of the current staff. Some contractual services were cut instead, as those can generally be recovered more quickly.

Department officials indicate that the next round of cuts will mean early release of prisoners (there is no statutory authority for this early release) or dramatic reductions in the intensity of parole supervision. These program cuts would have the most immediate and apparent impact on public safety in Kansas, as it would mean offenders out of prison early and in your community with less supervision.

Secretary of Corrections, Roger Werholtz, has developed some of the most innovative and proven programs for reintegrating parolees back into society using risk reduction strategies that assist them in acquiring pro-social behaviors. These programs have been recognized nationally as ones which keep paroled offenders from continuing a life of crime and re-entering our prison system.

As we move through the budget debate, it is critical to remember that further budget cuts will have a direct impact on you and your family. State government serves important functions in every Kansas community.

In Memoriam Juanita Almquist Rardin (September 18, 1942-August 9, 2009)

As many of you know, my wife and best friend for 45 years, Juanita, died this past August. Although a non-



smoker, Juanita battled lung cancer with unbelievable courage and a positive, uncomplaining attitude for 2 years and 8 months. Juanita was a fine student and graduated 2nd in her class from Paseo High School in 1960. We met and began our life together in 1962 while attending Kansas University. Juanita earned a degree in Elementary Education from KU in 1964 and started a long and meaningful career educating young children. After her 2003 retirement from Hartman Magnet School, she joined the staff of Blue Valley Montessori Pre-School in 2004 for an especially rewarding time as an assistant teacher until illness forced her to leave in 2007. Juanita's steadfast support and encouragement were essential during our 45 years of marriage and my service as your state representative. Juanita loved music and nature, especially Colorado and butterflies. Juanita's passion in life was giving, teaching, and loving in her own quiet way. She touched each person she encountered, and saw and nurtured only their best through her endless patience and determination. Juanita's legacy of love, kindness, and giving will live on through her family and friends and through the countless

children she touched with her special encouragement and care as they share and pass on her gift to others. If you would like to do something in her memory, I'm sure contributions would be welcome at these fine organizations:

Cancer Action, www.canceractionkc.org;

Kansas City Palliative Care and Hospice House, www.kansascityhospice.org;

Rocky Mountain National Park Fund and Nature Association, www.rmna.org

"Juanita, as you danced in the light with joy, love lifted you. As you brushed against this world so gently, you lifted us." –T.C.Ring

My sincerest appreciation and thanks to all who have prayed for and supported Juanita and me during our battle over these last almost 3 years.

Upcoming Paging Opportunities

If you know a student from sixth grade to age 18 who would like to page in the Kansas House, contact my office to inquire about opportunities. I currently have openings on February 3rd and March 23rd.

In Closing

As you can see, we have our work cut out for us over the next few months at the Capitol. The time has come to lead a real conversation about the challenges and responsibilities we face in Kansas. Vigorous debates lie ahead, but our most passionate debates are usually the most important. I welcome your feedback on these important issues or any other issue that impacts you and your family. This is the time for legislators to put aside political labels and do what's best Kansas. With hard work and dedication, we will transform the challenges of 2010 into new opportunities for 2011 and beyond.

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 7th Floor Docking State Office Building, Topeka, KS 66612. You can reach me at (785) 296-7646 or call the legislative hotline at 1-800-432-3924 to leave a message for me. Additionally, you can e-mail me at gene.rardin@house.ks.gov. My website is www.GeneRardin.info. You can also follow the legislative session online at www.kslegislature.org.

Useful Numbers and Resources:

The following is a list of the numbers I receive the most requests for during the legislative session. You can find these as well as many others online at <http://da.state.ks.us/phonebook>. I hope you will find this information helpful.

Adjutant General: 785.274.1001	Department on Aging: 800.432.3535	Attorney General: 785.296.2215
Better Business Bureau: 785.232.0454	Child/Adult Abuse Hotline: 800.922.5330	Child and Family Services: 785.296.4653
Commerce: 785.296.3481	Consumer Protection: 800.432.2310	Crime Tip Hotline: 800.572.7463
Crime Victim Assistance: 800.828.9745	Driver's License Bureau: 785.296.3963	Gov. Mark Parkinson: 800.748.4408
Kansas Health Wave: 800.792.4884	Highway Road Conditions: 800.585.7623	Housing Hotline: 800.752.4422
Insurance Hotline: 800.432.2484	Kansas Lottery: 785.296.5700	Legislative Hotline: 800.432.3924
Mental Health Services: 888.582.3759	Department of Revenue: 877.526.7738	School Safety Hotline: 877.626.8203
Social Security: 800.772.1213	State Capitol Tours: 785.296.3966	Taxpayer Assistance: 800.259.2829
Tax Refund Status: 800.894.0318	Teacher Certification: 785.296.2283	Unclaimed Property: 800.432.0386
Unemployment: 785.296.5074	Vital Statistics: 785.296.1405	Voter Registration: 785.296.4561
Welfare Fraud Hotline: 800.432.3913	Workers' Comp: 800.332.0353	Workforce Center: 785.235.5627