



Capitol Briefing



My Committees
Taxation
Transportation
Education Budget

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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 2: January 19-22, 2010

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- [From the Statehouse: Week 2](#) It is clear that this session will be almost entirely dominated by the \$400 million budget shortfall. I will keep you updated on this discussion. You and your family will be directly impacted by this year's budget in some way, no matter how we reach the ending balance.
- [Budget Update](#) The House Appropriations Committee continued to hear briefings from state agencies last week regarding individual agency budgets.
 - Unemployment Trust Fund has been severely depleted over the past year. In 2007, the Legislature approved an unemployment tax break to business owners because the UI Trust Fund was very healthy. A stipulation of this legislation was that the 2007 tax rates would be triggered in the event that the trust fund dipped to \$100 million. Three years later, after a year of tremendous economic hardship, the trigger has been reached.
 - Kansas National Guard has chosen to close 18 of its 56 armories in the state. These closures are a result of: budget cuts over the past decade, utility costs increasing by over \$500K, and a fundamental change in demographics and key transportation routes from when the facilities were built 50 years ago. This restructuring and reallocation of resources will help the Kansas National Guard better deal with crises faced by Kansas and our nation.
 - Disaster Relief a constant need in Kansas. Terrible winter storms in both 2006 and 2007 caused severe damage across the state. This was followed by a ground-leveling tornado in south-central Kansas in the spring of 2007, followed by major floods in Southeast Kansas the next summer. Combined, this racked up a bill of \$6.5 million for state government
 - Department of Revenue has been steadily increasing individual and corporate back tax settlements with those who have gotten behind on their state taxes for one reason or another. These collections have been a steadily increasing source of revenue for our state for a decade.
 - School Funding continues to be a key issue. Adequately funding our schools and ensuring that students receive a quality education that will prepare them for the work force is important not just to them, but to the economy of Kansas.

In This Issue continued (For easy navigation, press Ctrl and Click on desired link heading for more details)

- [“InsureNet” would protect drivers, generate revenue](#) On Wednesday, the House Transportation Committee heard testimony in support of a new, statewide system for tracking uninsured vehicles. The system, InsureNet, has already been installed in a variety of states, including Nebraska and Pennsylvania. The intelligent tracking systems (Intellisect) would take pictures of the rear of vehicles and process the license information through a national intranet system within one minute. If the identified vehicle is uninsured, the owner will receive a citation in the mail.
- [Hearings begin on Governor’s sales tax proposal](#) On Thursday, January 21, the House Taxation Committee held hearings for House Bill 2475, which is Governor Parkinson’s proposed 1 cent sales tax increase. Governor Parkinson introduced this proposal in his State of the State address as a means of protecting Kansas schools, essential services, and vulnerable citizens from deeper budget cuts.
- [Department of Labor working to reduce wait time](#) With the surge in unemployment claims, the Kansas Department of Labor's Unemployment Contact Center has experienced a growing demand for Unemployment Insurance benefits filings and claim information. They have pursued a number of different approaches to address the congestion being experienced in the call center.
- [Page Opportunities](#)
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From The Statehouse: Week 2

It is clear that this session will be almost entirely dominated by the \$400 million budget shortfall. I will keep you updated on this discussion. You and your family will be directly impacted by this year’s budget in some way, no matter how we reach the ending balance. I have included a summary of activity in the House Appropriations Committee from last week; I will have more to report in the coming weeks.

I hope you will stop by to visit me if you are ever in Topeka. However, please be aware that many legislators have moved offices and many committee meeting locations have changed. Some legislators and committee meetings will still be held in the Docking Building due to construction; many other offices have relocated within the Capitol. If you do intend to visit for an event please be sure to call so I can help you find your way.

Budget Update

The House Appropriations Committee continued to hear briefings from state agencies last week regarding individual agency budgets. Below is a general update about some issues of interest:

- *The Unemployment Trust Fund* been severely depleted over the past year. In 2007, the Legislature approved an unemployment tax break to business owners because the UI Trust Fund was very healthy. A stipulation of this legislation was that the 2007 tax rates would be triggered in the event that the trust fund dipped to \$100 million. Three years later, after a year of tremendous economic hardship, the trigger has been reached. We are fortunate to remain among the 23 other states that do not have outstanding loans from the Federal Unemployment Fund, some owing billions of dollars. However, Kansas’s unemployment is higher than it has been in 25 years. These benefits are critical to help struggling families pay for basic essentials while they search for new work. When the trust fund is replenished, the reduced tax rate will be restored.

- *The Kansas National Guard* has chosen to close 18 of its 56 armories in the state. These closures are a result of: budget cuts over the past decade, utility costs increasing by over \$500K, and a fundamental change in demographics and key transportation routes from when the facilities were built 50 years ago. This restructuring and reallocation of resources will help the Kansas National Guard better deal with crises faced by Kansas and our nation.
- *Disaster Relief* is a constant need in Kansas. Terrible winter storms in both 2006 and 2007 caused severe damage across the state. This was followed by a ground-leveling tornado in south-central Kansas in the spring of 2007, followed by major floods in Southeast Kansas the next summer. Combined, this racked up a bill of \$6.5 million for state government. Of that, we still owe nearly \$100K. This fiscal year we have budgeted for \$5 million in disaster relief, even though it is projected that we will have to spend in the neighborhood of \$30 million. This is a budget gap that must be filled. We all depend on government services when our homes and communities are destroyed/damaged by the severe weather patterns of our state.
- *The Kansas Department of Revenue* has been steadily increasing individual and corporate back tax settlements with those who have gotten behind on their state taxes for one reason or another. These collections have been a steadily increasing source of revenue for our state for a decade. Last year alone, \$140M was raked in through such settlements. In the first half of this fiscal year, the Kansas Department of Revenue has already captured \$40M in unpaid taxes.
- *School funding* continues to be a key issue. Adequately funding our schools and ensuring that students receive a quality education that will prepare them for the work force is important not just to them, but to the economy of Kansas. While it is imperative to adequately fund our schools, it is also important to see that those funds are allocated wisely. Testimony was presented in committee this week regarding responsible school funding and educational requirements. While across the board cuts to education are one way to go about things, they can also gut what we have worked so hard to build.

“InsureNet” would protect drivers, generate revenue

On Wednesday, the House Transportation Committee heard testimony in support of a new, statewide system for tracking uninsured vehicles. The system, InsureNet, has already been installed in a variety of states, including Nebraska and Pennsylvania.

The intelligent tracking systems (Intellisect) would take pictures of the rear of vehicles and process the license information through a national intranet system within one minute. If the identified vehicle is uninsured, the owner will receive a citation in the mail. To protect privacy, the information is destroyed 60 seconds after it is processed by the tracking system. No private data is retained in the system. This noninvasive approach has made the program popular with many groups and lawmakers

The technology would be placed alongside major interstates, in areas of high population and near the borders of Kansas. An automatic citation system would mail citations within 24 hours. The current law enforcement centers and other groups will not require upgrades to adapt to the new system. This would not only be beneficial for tracking uninsured vehicles, it would also monitor registration, stolen vehicles, congestion, and Amber, Silver and DHS alerts on the roadways.

There is no cost for implementation. The service, maintenance, and equipment are paid for by a portion of the new revenue InsureNet generates. It is estimated that \$150 million in uninsured motorist fees will be generated for the state of Kansas in the first year.

In a year of unprecedented economic crisis, we absolutely must put all revenue-enhancing ideas on the table. InsureNet appears to be a creative way to both generate revenue and protect Kansas citizens on the road. The committee has taken no action on this proposal, but I will keep you posted as it progresses through the legislative process.

Hearings begin on Governor's sales tax proposal

On Thursday, January 21, the House Taxation Committee held hearings for House Bill 2475, which is Governor Parkinson's proposed 1 cent sales tax increase. Governor Parkinson introduced this proposal in his State of the State address as a means of protecting Kansas schools, essential services, and vulnerable citizens from deeper budget cuts.

The hearings last week were focused on supporters; opponents are scheduled for this week (week three). Concerned parents, Kansans with disabilities, public school representatives all testified that a revenue package was the only way to prevent school closings, teacher layoffs, increased class sizes, and general subpar public education throughout the state.

I am not ready to endorse or reject any revenue proposal just yet; we will hear from opponents of this bill next week. I will consider both sides with a singular focus on what is best for our district and state.

Obviously any dialogue about tax policy is tough to maneuver. I am interested in your honest feedback on these discussions. Should we continue to cut these services or should we seriously consider a revenue package of some kind? Please contact me and tell me what you think.

Department of Labor working to reduce wait time

With the surge in unemployment claims, the Kansas Department of Labor's Unemployment Contact Center has experienced a growing demand for Unemployment Insurance benefits filings and claim information. They have pursued a number of different approaches to address the congestion being experienced in the call center. The call center was restructured into phone queues staffed by service representatives trained to answer specific questions. The interactive phone system directs claimants into particular queues depending on the subject of the call. This has helped to reduce the wait time for people wanting to file an initial claim and for those with special claims, including federal or military claims. A large number of calls are general inquiry in nature. While they have significantly reduced wait times in most queues, the general inquiry queue continues to experience the longer wait times.

Applicants are encouraged to file their unemployment claims online. The online application was revised and streamlined in September. A marketing campaign in print, online, television and radio promotes filing online at www.GetKansasBenefits.com. We continue to look for ways to reduce the congestion in the call center to better serve our claimants. We are working toward new methods to reduce the number of calls to the call center.

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