

# Senator to take reins of natural resources committee

By Kevin Bottrell  
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State Sen. Ralph Ostmeier of Grinnell has been chosen to head the Senate Natural Resources Committee when the Legislature comes back into session this month.

Sen. Ostmeier, a Republican whose district includes Norton County and the northwest corner of the state, said he was pleasantly surprised to hear he'd gotten the job. Natural resources, he said, was one of the committees he had expressed an interest in to the Senate leadership.

Many committee assignments were being shuffled after Senate Majority Leader Derek Schmidt was elected as Kansas Attorney General this year. Senate

President Steve Morris had mentioned to Sen. Ostmeier that the chairmanship of natural resources was a possibility, if he supported Jay Emler of Lindsborg for majority leader. Sen. Ostmeier, however, decided to support Sen. Terry Bruce of Hutchinson for the job.

"I liked Jay as chairman of the Senate Ways and Means Committee," Sen. Ostmeier said. "I felt he was doing good work there."

When Emler won the post of majority leader, Sen. Ostmeier said, he didn't think he had a chance at being picked for the committee.

"I know how the game is played," he said.

However, the leadership decided to

give the chairmanship to Sen. Ostmeier, who was vice chairman two years ago.

Sen. Ostmeier said he is pleased and excited to be back on the panel. The natural resources committee handles a lot of issues critical to western Kansas, he said, such as wildlife, parks and especially water.

"I've got water issues out here that are more important than anything," he said.

The committee was pretty quiet last year, Sen. Ostmeier said, but has issues coming up with the state shutting down wells. Unfortunately, he said, there won't be much money to work with.

The state budget crisis will take up a lot of the Senate's time. Sen. Ostmeier

said he hopes to avoid any more large cuts to education.

"Education is a big industry in western Kansas," he said. "We've made so many cuts out here already. Time will tell."

Sen. Ostmeier voted in favor of last year's sales tax increase, something he said put him on the outs with some of the more conservative state senators. Sen. Ostmeier said that when he toured the district, many people asked him to vote in favor of the increase to help schools, which were losing state money and already suffering from drops in enrollment.

"People were in my face," he said. "They wanted to know how long I was going to just say no (on raising taxes),

and what I was going to do for them. I had no answers."

Sen. Ostmeier said he hopes the economy will improve so that the Legislature can eventually get rid of the tax increase without cutting schools.

He also was picked for the redistricting committee, which will look at population numbers and redraw legislative district boundaries. In the 2010 session, he was chairman of the Senate Agriculture Committee.

He said he will head to Topeka for the swearing-in ceremony Monday. There will be a lot of new faces after last year's election. Sen. Ostmeier said he'll have to meet the new people and figure out where they stand.

## Sheriff

and making sure the office runs smoothly.

With the new system, the dispatchers will have less time for anything but inputting data into the computers, he said. The office setup will need to be changed also because the new equipment will need more and different space.

The sheriff said that in the larger counties, dispatch does nothing but that. However, out here in the small places, the dispatchers help out with all sorts of jobs from answering the phone to doing jail checks.

The upgrade isn't the biggest problem, however, he said. The state is headed for a newer, fancier system. The next step, he said, will be text and video from crime scenes or wrecks. The state will be expecting this in the future, he said.

However, the sheriff admitted that while this upgrade is not so bad he doesn't understand the technological equipment and systems needed for the next step and is worried about the final costs.

"The system is so far over our head we don't understand it," he said. "I can see us blind sided somewhere down the road." This statement was made due to the fact that the department does not know what it will all entail since they do not know exactly how it works. Training will come later to

clarify all questions.

In Shawnee County, he said, there are two people that do nothing but take care of the system.

"It's a total change, he said, "like going from typewriters to computers."

Right now, he said, the county is about one-half step ahead of what the state is requiring.

While all the equipment is currently up to date, every county radio will have to be reprogrammed soon, the sheriff said. The cost will be \$30 to \$40 a radio and the county has 150 to 200 or them.

The radios will have to be reprogrammed to a narrow band, which the Federal Communications Commission is requiring and wants counties to go to. Right now the radios can operate on either the older or the new band width but after the switch to the new band width, any radio, that's not reprogrammed, just won't work.

Commissioner Carolyn Applegate said she could understand the problem.

"All counties in the future will need a technician on staff just to keep up with the unfunded mandates," she said.

Commissioner John Miller wanted to know if the county would need to redo the dispatch area this year.

The sheriff said he would know when the ungraded system is ready

to install.

The sheriff said it wasn't that he didn't think the new equipment would be nice.

In a perfect world, he said, all the patrol cars would have lap top computers and global positioning systems. Right now, however, it'd be nice if all his cars had video cameras.

Most counties do have video cameras in all cars, he said, but it's expensive and can run up to \$5,000 per car. Norton County has one car with video that works and would need four more.

In other business, the commissioners:

- The commissioners talked to Triple Creek Extension Agent Keith VanSkiike about the possibility of moving his office to the 4-H Building so that the space he is in now on the first floor of the courthouse could be used by dispatch, which is going to have to have expanded quarters in the near future. The commissioners assured him that they would do some remodeling so that there would be private office space in the building.
- Heard from Noxious Weed Supervisor Reggie Beckman that he will have to order more chemicals between now and spring.
- Agreed to close the landfill for the funeral of Bonnie Laughlin.

## Man charged in poaching case

A Long Island man received a summons to the Decatur County District Court just before Christmas in a recent poaching incident in that county.

Jake Swisher faces two charges, one count of possessing the carcass of an "antlered mule deer having an inside spread measurement of at least 22 inches" taken in Kansas.

The second charge is for taking an "antlered mule deer having an inside spread measurement of at least 22 inches" in Kansas without a valid big-game permit.

Both charges are class C non-person misdemeanors.

Mr. Swisher, Long Island, is scheduled to answer to the charges at 10 a.m. on Tuesday, Feb. 8.

The deer allegedly was taken on or about Wednesday, Dec. 8.

Five Wisconsin men who were arrested in the alleged poaching case also have a first appearance scheduled for the same time and day in Decatur County District Court.

The men were arrested in the Lyle area, in the northeast corner of the county near the Nebraska line. Jail records identified them as John Jacobs III, 53; Joseph R. Jacobs, 28; John Jacobs IV, 30;

Mark G. Jacobs, 45; and Paul J. Jacobs, 26. The family is from De Pere, Wis.

Each was arrested on charges of illegally killing a trophy-size mule deer and were later charged with a felony count of commercialization of wildlife, which is spelled out in the Kansas statute as knowingly or willingly capturing or killing wildlife for commercial purposes. That includes deer.

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## SHERIFF'S LOG

### November 11

7:40 a.m. Received a call from a motorist, who said that they hit a deer.

8:48 a.m. Received a request for a controlled burn of scrap wood north of the airport.

8:56 a.m. Received a call about the deer which had been hit earlier in the day, was still alive and about two miles east of New Almelo on the north side of Hwy 9 in a pasture.

9:20 a.m. Received a 911 cell call but could not get hold of the caller. Trooper Schoenberger said he would check but the caller called back and said the call had been an accident.

10:28 a.m. Received a call of black cattle out at the intersection of W5 and Rd.S.

1:17 p.m. Was notified that sheriff's officers were at Veterans' Day Parade.

1:52 p.m. Got a call about a gas skip by a woman in an older white Pontiac Grand Am.

2:39 p.m. Received a report of a black cow out on Hwy. 9 about one-half mile east of te 16-mile corner.

5:46 p.m. Heard of a deer-vehicle accident on U.S. 36 between W2 and W4. A wrecker was needed.

10:34 p.m. Received a call from a woman looking for her son, who hadn't been seen or heard from in over two hours. She called back 20-minutes later to say he had called and everything was fine.

### November 12

7:48 a.m. Was told that a fire truck would be going to a controlled burn north of Almema on E9.

11:05 a.m. Received a report of a camper down in Elmwood Park in the road in front of the race track.

11:59 a.m. Received a report of child abuse. Officers talked to reporting party.

2:07 p.m. Received a call that a Colorado driver's license had been left at a store.

2:41 p.m. Was told a hitchhiker was going to be dropped off at the Phillips-Norton county line. Subject is heading for Goodland.

3:39 p.m. Received request for a

map of the county. Send requester to the appraiser's office.

3:58 p.m. Received a call of a vehicle-deer accident on E12 south of Hwy 383. The animal was still alive and driver wanted deputy to come out and tag it for him.

4:22 p.m. Received a call about a female hitchhiker at the 14-mile corner. Over the next hour, received three more calls about hitchhiker.

5:31 p.m. Was told that a red car stopped and picked up female hitchhiker.

7:28 p.m. Asked officer to check on pickup and trailer with two people in it parked beside a house. Officer found out they were waiting for someone in a house across the street and then all were going to Jennings with furniture. The spot they were in was the only place they had found to park.

### November 13

3:49 a.m. Received a burglar alarm call. Officer found the door locked but open. Everything was OK.

7:41 a.m. Received a call of a vehicle-deer accident at mile marker 123 on U.S. 36.

8:01 a.m. Received a call that a white pickup was pulled over about one-half mile west of E9 on U.S.36. Caller believed vehicle was out of gas.

8:48 a.m. Received request to unlock navy blue van with keys locked inside.

10:29 a.m. Received a complaint that someone had taken a white female boxer out of yard. Dog was found and returned a couple of hours later.

10:45 a.m. Had a man in requesting information on registering a firearm.

10:56 a.m. Received a report of a non-injury two-vehicle accident between E7 and E8 on Rd. S.

11:56 a.m. Had request to unlock a Chevrolet Avalanche with keys locked inside.

12:35 p.m. Received a request for an ambulance for a woman, who had fallen and hurt her knee and hand.

2:34 p.m. Received a report of theft of items from a farm south

of Norton.

4 p.m. Received a call about a woman having trouble with an ex-boyfriend

8:22 p.m. Received a request to unlock a van.

### November 14

10:16 a.m. Received a call from Furnas County, Neb., about a gas skip. Vehicle was a gray Chevy with a white toolbox in back.

10:36 a.m. Received a report of an injured deer standing in a field on the north side of U.S. 36 about five and one-half miles west of Norton.

3:25 p.m. Received a gas skip call from a local service station. Vehicle was a two-toned black and silver Ford pickup.

4:05 p.m. Received a message about a gas skip from Arapahoe, Neb. This one was a gray GMC pickup.

5:03 p.m. Received a call from a young woman. There was lot of static and she was hard to hear. Tried unsuccessfully several times to contact but static continued. Officer finally located call and reported that it seemed to be kids fighting and that he heard three different stories.

9:48 p.m. Received a call from a man, who said someone had broken into his room and he wanted an officer there before he sees if anything is missing.

### November 15

9:21 a.m. Woman asked to speak to an officer about her vehicle, which was hit over the weekend by an unknown vehicle.

10:33 a.m. Received a 911 call but no one was on the line. Found out it was a misdial.

12:33 p.m. Received thank you from rancher, who was called that his calves were out when deer hunters cut a fence.

12:52 p.m. Received 911 call from woman, who was having trouble breathing.

1:59 p.m. Logan County deputy arrived with prisoner for Norton County to hold for Department of Corrections until tomorrow.

6:23 p.m. Received call that a deer survey will be done with spotlighting out at the dam and on the south side of the lake.

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