

Legislative News

There will be no shortage of information to share with the 120th District this year. In this article, I am going to share information on the most asked questions I have received.

Governor's budget -the last time Kansas met the constitutional ending balance requirement was in 2008. The constitution requires a 7.5-percent ending balance. The Fiscal Year 2013 budget provides an ending balance of \$465 million, exceeding the 7.5 percent statutory requirement.

I have received some complaints that we should spend the excess for programs that have been really hurt. I believe that if we would have maintained a cushion in the bank, when the crisis hit, we would have been in a position to better manage and would have not had to make the cuts we did. Kansas families must budget to have a cushion in the bank; the Kansas legislature should be no different.

Last week, I wrote about the difference in the All Fund Budget and the General Fund Budget. In this year's budget, the All Funds Budget decreases by \$596.6 million, or 4.0 percent. The State General Fund Budget decreases by .6 percent, or \$39.1 million. I would say that we are headed in the right direction.

The Governor has also recommended that the Kansas Arts Commission and the Kansas

Film Commission be combined into a new Creative Industries Commission in the budget of the Department of Commerce. They will be funded with \$200,000 and will be charged with showing how the money is used and how they can improve state financial resources.

The first rule of being stuck in a hole is to stop digging and that is exactly the plan for the Kansas Public Employees Retirement System (KPRS). While the hole of \$8.3 billion seems insurmountable, there is a manageable solution. The first step is to fund the state's year-to-year obligations and this budget does that. The next step is to reform the current system to prevent future employees from being trapped in an inflexible system. However, current Kansas Public Employees Retirement System members, those retired and already vested, will not see a change in the program. Those individuals will continue to receive the payments as promised. It is undecided as to what to do with members not yet vested. The recommendations for new employees are still being considered but I believe that we will ultimately pass a defined contribution plan for new members. This would help insure the fund stays solvent and retirees who have been promised a pension will receive it.

The Governor recommends no general state employee salary in-

crease for the year. That is better than last year when a legislator recommended a 7.5-percent cut across the board. For the sixth year the Governor recommended funding for the longevity bonus payment at the \$50 level per year capped out at \$1,250. Employees hired after June 15, 2008, are not eligible for the longevity bonus.

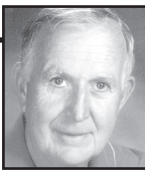
I love all of my committees, but Appropriations has proven to be very exciting. I will learn how every penny of the General Fund Budget is spent. One of my favorite hobbies is hunting and fishing. Today in Appropriations, we heard from the new director and a friend of mine, Robin Jennison. The Department of Wildlife and Tourism has been given a directive to become self sufficient. One of their proposals, to achieve this goal, is to have Kansans, age 65 and over, purchase a license. I have received quite a few e-mails about this.

Here is my point of view. A very high percentage of outdoorsmen are 65 and over, thanks to us Baby Boomers. I want my grandchildren to have the same outdoor experiences as I have had and am willing to buy a license as long as I can still hunt. It is a small price to pay.

St. Francis Rec Commission continues to sponsor are girl's gymnastics, youth basketball and youth wrestling. The gymnastics is coached by Conny Paulsen on Tuesday and Thursday evenings. Basketball for second through sixth graders is offered in two Monday evening time slots. Pee Wee wrestling has two practices a week - Tuesday and Thursday. Many volunteers coach the youth programs. All three sports have room if you wish your child to participate.

For questions or to join classes call Penny at 332-3949.

By
Ward
Cassidy



120th State Representative

Businesses under scrutiny whenever they sell tobacco

By Karen Krien
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Businesses selling tobacco products not only offer a service but are also under scrutiny every time they sell a pack of cigarettes or a tin of chewing tobacco.

Gone are the days when a kid can come into the store and buy a pack of cigarettes for their dad.

Kansas is required by a federal law that young people under the age of 18 are not allowed to purchase tobacco products.

Bud Erskin, owner of Majestic Service on U.S. 36, St. Francis, is one of those selling tobacco products.

We are required to ask for identification when people come in to purchase tobacco products, he said. And, if we don't and there is an officer from the department

of revenue/alcoholic beverage control who asks the person if we asked for identification, we are in trouble. There are also those working with the department who will make a purchase to see if we ask for identification.

If a retailer is caught not asking for identification and selling tobacco products to someone 18 years old or younger, they can be fined up to \$1,000. In addition, the clerks who are caught and convicted of selling or giving away cigarettes or tobacco products are guilty of a misdemeanor punishable by a minimum fine of \$200 for each offense.

If a customer looks underage and does not have a photo identification, I will refuse to sell them tobacco products, Mr. Erskin said. I will not sell to a youth, even if

they have a written note from a parent, nor will I sell to an adult who is buying tobacco for a minor.

It is also illegal for kids under the age of 18 to buy tobacco products and, of course, it is illegal to use false or misleading proof of age.

Tobacco is addictive and deadly. Research shows that the younger a person begins smoking cigarettes, the more likely he or she is to become strongly addicted to nicotine.

In Kansas, nearly 4,000 people die each year from smoking-related illness such as cancer, heart disease and emphysema. Of those young people under the age of 18 in Kansas who are alive today, 57,000 will die prematurely from smoking-related illness.

New identity theft scam targets medicare recipients over phone

A new identity theft scam aimed at Medicare recipients has recently come to the attention of the Better Business Bureau. In this latest fraud attempt consumers on Medicare are being contacted by phone. The caller states that they want to send the consumer a "new Medicare card." They then go over the consumer's personal information and eventually ask for a checking account number.

This is not a legitimate Medicare phone call. The Bureau contacted Medicare and were told, "We don't contact the consumer regarding new cards; the consumer would need to contact us."

These types of calls are opportunities for identity theft. Consumers should keep the following tips in mind:

- Verify a source before sharing information.

- Don't give out personal or medical information on the phone or through the mail unless you've initiated the contact and you're sure you know who you're dealing with. Be wary of offers of "free" health services or products from providers who require you to give them your health plan ID number. Medical identity thieves may pose as employees of insurance companies, doctors' offices, clinics, pharmacies, and even government agen-

cies to get people to reveal their personal information. Then, they use it to commit fraud, like submitting false claims for Medicare reimbursement.

- Safeguard your medical and health insurance information.

If you keep copies of your medical or health insurance records, make sure they're secure, whether they're on paper in a desk drawer or electronic in a file online. Be on guard when you use the Internet, especially to access accounts or records related to your medical care or insurance.

If you are asked to share sensitive personal information like your Social Security number, insurance account information or any details of your health or medical conditions on the Internet, ask why it's needed, how it will be kept safe, and whether it will be shared. Look for website privacy policies and read them: They should specify how site operators maintain the accuracy of the personal information they collect, as well as how they secure it, who has access to it, how

they will use the information you provide, and whether they will share it with third parties.

If you decide to share your information online, look for indicators that the site is secure, like a lock icon on the browser's status bar or a URL that begins "https:" (the "s" is for secure). Remember that email is not secure.

- Treat your trash carefully.

To thwart a medical identity thief who may pick through your trash or recycling bins to capture your personal and medical information, shred your health insurance forms and prescription and physician statements. It's also a good idea to destroy the labels on your prescription bottles and packages before you throw them out.

If you have received phone calls like the ones described above or fallen victim to this scam please contact the Office Inspector General (OIG) with Medicare. Their hotline is 1-800-447-8477.

You may also contact the Better Business Bureau office at 1-800-856-2417.

Rec 4 U

Now that the busy holiday season is over, why not start the new year with an early morning exercise class to get you back in shape.

Connie Jenkins is offering Zumba classes three times a week starting Tuesday, Jan. 31. Plan to join the class on Tuesday, Thursday and Friday mornings from 6 to 6:50 a.m. in the high school wrestling room.

Zumba is a Latin-inspired, calorie burning dance/exercise program. A monthly fee of \$30 will be charged for the class.

Not sure if it is for you? Connie will conduct two free introductory classes on Thursday and Friday mornings, Jan. 26 and 27, from 6 to 6:50 a.m. to see if you would enjoy attending.

Call Connie to answer your questions, sign-up or learn more about Zumba.

Woodworking
Dennis Friedrichs, high school woodworking teacher, began another adult woodwork-

ing class last Tuesday evening, Jan. 17. This is the third time Mr. Friedrichs has been willing to teach evening, adult classes. Eighteen people have taken the opportunity to build the project of their choice.

Western dance
Western dance classes are on the calendar to begin Sunday, Feb. 12 from 5 to 6 p.m. in the grade school gym. Once again, Matt and Mila Bandel will volunteer their time to share their love of country swing dance.

Give it a try this year even if you have to twist your dance partner's arm! Matt and Mila cater their classes to your level whether its beginner or not. There will be five Sunday sessions at no cost to you.

Junior high and high school students are welcome to join in the fun. Last winter five couples took advantage of the class. The more the merrier - give it a try.

Current youth programs
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By
Penny
Gienger



St. Francis Rec Director

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THANK YOU

The American Legion and Community Center, Haigler, NE, wants to thank each and every one of you that recently contributed to our air conditioning fund-raiser. Thanks to you, our goal has been attained, the contract is in place and the work to be done in the near future. We all look forward to much "cooler" and more enjoyable summer during the functions at our facility.

We hope you will all join us.

Even though the weather has been nice, don't neglect your car care this winter. If you are due for a winter service, now is the time.



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83rd Annual Kansas Day Celebration

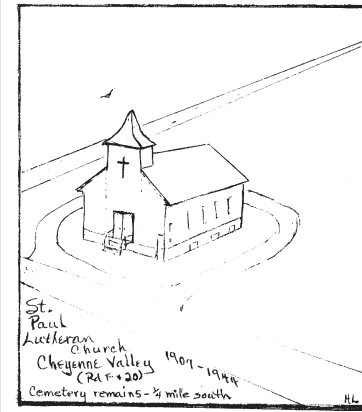
Bird City Legion Hall, Bird City

Sunday, Jan. 29

Registration — 10 a.m.

Potluck — 12:30 p.m.

Program — 1:30 p.m.



Theme Sunday On The Prairie Program is remembering Prairie Churches. Area men and women will give short presentations on early churches.



Valentine Dinner

Monday, Feb. 13 • 6:30 p.m.
at Riverside Recreation

Tickets: \$30/couple — \$15/single

Serving 3 full-meal dinner options:
Steak, Chicken or Shrimp

For tickets call Ron Maifield,
719-342-5242 or 785-332-3133
or Kary Zwegardt, 785-332-0308.

Tickets are going fast!

Sponsored by the St. Francis
Community Church

Watch St. Francis Indian Wrestling

Western Kansas Challenge at Smith Center

January 28, 2012

9 a.m.

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