

# Legislature takes break after approving budget

It is really nice to have a Governor that knows the value of Western Kansas. Governor Brownback will be at the Colby Airport about 10:30 a.m. next Monday to sign a bill into law that will benefit Western Kansas.

The Rural Opportunity Zone Bill will allow persons who live out of the state of Kansas to move into one of the 50 counties in this zone which includes all of northwest Kansas. They will not have to pay state income taxes for 5 years.

Governor Brownback announced he will sponsor a Governors Pheasant Hunt in Oakley in November. This will be called Kansas Governor's Ringneck Classic and will be held Nov. 18-20 near Oakley. The weekend will include a community dinner Friday night, then hunt on Saturday with awards and a dinner on Saturday night followed by a bonus hunt on Sunday.

This week marked the final week of the regular session for the Kansas Legislature. On Friday, after several long hours of work, the House of Representatives adjourned until Wednesday, April 27, for its annual break.

During this time research and revenue staff will compile information on the state's economy and revenue numbers and update our fiscal outlook so we can take additional action on the budget upon our return, if necessary.

The April break provides the opportunity for many of us, in the



**rick billinger**  
state rep.

legislature, to return home and spend time with our friends and neighbors discussing the issues directly impacting them.

The Legislature is required by the Kansas Constitution to produce a budget each year and this week the primary focus of the Legislature was taking a step to fulfill that responsibility by passing a budget for the upcoming 2012 fiscal year which begins on July 1. On Tuesday, the Senate passed their version of the budget which provides for an \$8.1 million ending balance at the end of the fiscal year.

On Thursday the House worked all day on the budget, there were 28 amendments offered. This time I kept track and at 11:05 p.m. we passed out a budget.

There was a wide range of feelings on the House budget, but at the end of the day almost 70 legislators, regardless of their concerns, understood passing the House budget was the first step in reforming state government and trusting Governor Brownback to lead us to a new era of small, responsive and responsible government.

The House budget has an approximate \$80 million ending balance,

controls spending and is the first balanced budget produced by the Kansas House of Representatives in three years. For the first time since 1972 total state spending has decreased by nearly \$900 million. Maybe with all the new legislators this session we will be able to start being responsible with what little money there is available.

I look forward to visiting with my constituents during my time home in April. The Legislature still has a significant amount of work to do when we return for the veto session and it is critical I know your thoughts and opinions.

I have had some short surveys printed and will distribute them throughout the 121st district. If you would fill one out and return them I would be very appreciative. There is space on the bottom if you would put your e-mail address I will e-mail information from time to time.

### Workers Compensation (Sub HB 2134)

Workers compensation was another major issue requiring legislative action this year. These laws have remained unchanged for over a decade, and this year the legislature was able to make substantive and necessary improvements to our overall structure. The vote on this measure represented years of work and compromise by every interested party, and I'm happy to see it

resolved as we did work this bill in my commerce committee.

Sub for HB 2134 defines or revises several substantive portions of the Workers Compensation Act. Current law prohibits compensation for certain types of employee injuries caused by their deliberative actions or by failure to use adequate protection. The bill disallows compensation if an employee's injury is the result of violating workplace safety rules and regulation or any injuries caused by fighting or horseplay with a co-worker. In addition, the bill deletes the requirement of employers needing probable cause to require drug or alcohol testing if believed the employee is impaired. Instead employers must have sufficient cause and employees may overcome any positive results if clear and convincing evidence is provided proving otherwise.

The bill extends the period of time where an employee gives notice an injury accident or repetitive trauma has occurred from 10 to 30 days. However, instances where the employee was no longer employed or sought medical treatment specifically for the injury 20 calendar days are given for the employee to provide notice. Once an employee has reached their maximum prescribed medical treatment, the employer's obligation to provide medical and health care services would be terminated.

It also replaces current conditions for permanent total disability and

requires expert evidence to prove permanent total disability and prevents an injured worker from getting more than one award for permanent total disability during their lifetime. If an employee is unable to accommodate temporary work restrictions imposed on them by their treating physician, the employee may be entitled to benefits for temporary total disability. If an employee refuses to accept work to accommodate the temporary disability the presumption would make the employee ineligible to receive temporary benefits. They would be ineligible if already receiving unemployment benefits. Current law allows parties to enter into agreements for lump sum payments of benefits and the bill allows lump sum settlements if approved by an administrative law judge and prorated over the life expectancy of the injured employee.

Caps on maximum compensation for benefits are increased in the bill from \$125,000 to \$155,000 for permanent total disability; from \$100,000 to \$130,000 for temporary total disability; from \$100,000 to \$135,000 for permanent or temporary partial disability; and from \$250,000 to \$300,000 for death. In addition, employers would be responsible for paying up to \$1,000 for court appointed conservators when the employee's death is caused by injury.

If an employee refuses to submit to a medical exam when requested by the employer, the benefits of

the employee are terminated under current law. The bill broadens the appeals process for future medical treatment so employees, employers and the insurance carrier can request a post-award hearing for medical treatment. If an administrative law judge finds the work-related injury to be the prevailing factor, future medical treatment may be awarded. However, if an employee does not seek or receive medical treatment within two years from the date of the compensation award or within two years of their last medical treatment, an employer may seek termination of future medical benefits.

The House approved the final version of HB 2134 by a vote of 120 to 0 and the Senate by a vote of 37 to 0 on Friday. The bill now goes to Governor Brownback for his consideration.

I would like to thank my recent pages, Whitney Schultz from Brewster High School and Andrea Roeder from Goodland High School. I was happy to have Hayden Ribordy stop by for a couple of photos when he was paging for Senator Ostmeyer.

Thanks for the opportunity to represent you in Topeka. If I may help you in anyway please contact me at Rick.Billinger@house.ks.gov or my phone number is (785) 899-4700.

# Toll free phone number provides information

By Ron Barkley

*American Cancer Society  
Hero of Hope 2010  
Team Captain Relay for Life  
Team: Teachers for Life  
rbarkley@eaglecom.net*

And the life saving number is (800) 227-2345.

Not a day goes by when I don't see some form of toll free number on TV, in the paper or a magazine that is begging me to order music, a free sample of a new weight loss product or order the latest whiz-bang kitchen gadget. But the number listed above, maybe it is more recognizable if we list it in another form, (800) ACS-2345 is truly a life saving number. It is the number that will put the caller in touch with the American Cancer Society help line that is there to help you 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Sadly many people wait too long

to make this all important phone call or think that there is nothing that can be done to help them. This help line is just that, a help line. Many people think that this help line is there to provide money to pay bills. If the American Cancer Society were to pay bills for victims of cancer they would be out of funds in less than one day. If the help line doesn't pay bills then what can they do? Please let me give you some examples of the help they offer. The center will help you: find someone to help explain the options available for treatment, assist you in ways to manage the cost of treatment, locate a facility where you can obtain treatment, help you obtain a gas card to aide transportation cost to treatment, see if there is a Hope Lodge to stay at while out of town during cancer treatment, assist you with finding legal help to manage credit for paying treatment

bills, help you find a support group for emotional help, offer suggestions for questions to ask the doctor to explain a diagnosis and put you in touch with local sources of support and help. These are just a few of the many ways that a call to the life saving number (800) ACS-2345 can help you as a cancer patient.

Maybe you don't have cancer but your mom, dad or spouse have been diagnosed with cancer, you too can make that call and receive help and support in your role as a care giver. The important thing to remember is that if cancer has or is impacting your life...make that

call, someone will be there to help you. To see other services that the society has available log on to www.cancer.org. You will be amazed and the information there is free and up to date.

This nationwide service is offered to you free, but the society has to have funds to supply this life saving service. Relay for Life events all across the U.S. and across the world are helping raise money to support this service and many more to caregivers and victims of cancer. Many times local residents question why they should contribute to a Relay for Life event that gives money to the

society. I assure you that the money any event raises will help someone, somewhere in their battle with cancer. Current data from the Kansas region reveals that thousands of Kansans received help from these funds in their cancer battle in over 20 different categories. More to the point, 23 individuals in Sherman County received 46 direct services from the society in 2010. Other counties in northwest Kansas have received similar assistance. This information does not even reflect the excess of \$3 million of grant money for ongoing cancer research in Kansas hospitals and universities.

You can be part of this local, state, national and global fight against cancer. The Sherman County Relay for Life will be Friday and Saturday, June 3rd and 4th at the Goodland High School track. You can form a team, join a team, purchase a luncheon to honor a cancer victim or aid in a local fund raiser or become a corporate sponsor. Maybe you can just hang a purple ribbon. Do you want to get involved with the Sherman County Relay for Life? Call Chairperson Ginger Chadwick at (785) 890-2525.

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**Responsibilities:** The Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) is responsible for the performances of basic nursing duties to include execution of physician orders, operation of pill call, operation of sick call, and assisting the physician in examinations and treatments and performs technical/clinical procedures within the scope of his/her license. Assists in the professional management of the facility medical department.

**Qualifications:** Graduate from an approved school of nursing with a certificate as a Licensed Practical Nurse. Must be licensed in the state of employment. A valid driver's license is required.

**Responsibilities:** The Registered Nurse (RN) plans and provides comprehensive nursing care including, but not limited to, executing Licensed Independent Provider's orders, dispensing and administering medications, and assisting Licensed Independent Provider in examinations and treatment of patients. Applies nursing and supervisory techniques required in the care, treatment and referrals of inmates/residents. Performs all technical/clinical procedures within the scope of his/her education and licensure.

**Qualifications:** Graduate from an accredited college, university or nursing program with a degree/diploma in nursing. Most possess current licensure in the state of employment. One year of professional nursing experience required. A valid driver's license is required.

**Deadline to Apply: April 25th**  
**Academy Start Date: May 9th**

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*Prom*  
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SATURDAY, APRIL 16, 2011

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Join us for a night of fabulous food, fun games, popular tunes performed by the Blue Healers, and an outstanding silent & live auction!

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**Where:** VFW Post  
824 Main St.  
Goodland, KS 67735

**When:** Saturday, April 16, 2011

**Times:** Doors Open 6:00 PM (MT)

**Ticket Info:** \$50 per ticket

**Other:** Relive or redo your high school prom! Dress in your favorite costume from your high school prom, or your favorite high school t.v. character (costumes optional) and participate in a night of dining, costume contests, music, games, auctions, and much more! This is your night to dress as formal, casual, or crazy as you would like, so don't miss out on all of the fun!

**Reserve your tickets online today at: [www.nwktc.edu](http://www.nwktc.edu)**  
**Must RSVP by April 8!**  
**Tables of 8 or more contact Sherri Knitig @ 785.890.1502**

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