

Legislator thinks session will be busy



rick billinger
state rep.

As a legislator, the cooling temperatures and rapidly approaching holiday season remind me the upcoming session of the Kansas Legislature is a mere two months away. The 2012 session already looks to be a busy one with strengthening the state economy, education finance reform, immigration, Medicaid reform, redistricting, tax reform and further balancing of the state budget already taking precedence on the agenda.

Although early, policy proposals on the above issues (and others) are already forming and I believe it is an important part of the process to keep my constituents updated as we work together to represent our shared interests. Reliable feedback is critical in making sure I accurately represent my friends and neighbors here in the district. With this in mind I will be having a meet and greet fundraiser in all four county seats, Hill City, Hoxie, Colby and Goodland. Please call or e-mail and I'd be happy to discuss any topic you are interested in.

State Budget Update

Last year, the Legislature passed

a budget that, for the first time since 1972, decreased all-funds state spending over \$800 million and turned a \$500 million deficit into a \$50 million surplus without raising taxes. However, work on reducing the state budget will continue. History shows revenues will remain erratic as the economy struggles and we must pay off state debt and spend conservatively to better stabilize the budget.

One of our most challenging difficulties in Kansas is finding reasonable solutions for a state with such diverse interests and local needs. An effective solution for rural legislators is often not as attractive to our urban counterparts. It's never an easy process, and many times increased revenues make it more difficult. These additional funds could be used to "buy down" our

income tax rates, fund services we've been forced to cut in recent years, or simply pocketed in order to help build a reserve fund for future rainy days.

Tax Reform and the Kansas Economy

As a growing number of states continue to consider a significant reduction or elimination of the income tax, Governor Brownback has indicated he plans to introduce legislation for the 2012 session that trends in a similar direction.

The Governor's proposal is based on the flat tax philosophy to gradually lower the state income and corporate tax rates as state revenues increase. Currently, Kansas has the second highest tax rate in the region behind Nebraska and the administration's models indicate this approach will lower the state tax rates to the second lowest in the region behind Colorado.

Education Finance Formula Reform

In October, Governor Brownback announced plans to introduce

legislation reforming the current education funding formula in Kansas. The existing formula, law since 1992, has been the subject of several lawsuits, a source of constant frustration, and may have reached the end of its life-span. A new strategy is required to enable districts throughout our diverse state to equip our children to compete for jobs in an increasingly competitive society.

Currently, the plan exists only in the form of a basic proposal. From here, the Governor and legislators throughout the state hope to work with local shareholders in order to determine exactly which parts of this "first draft" make the most sense.

Kansas Medicare Reform

Due to ongoing federal budget issues, reports indicate the Obama administration is considering a \$72 billion cut to Medicaid. Should this happen, Kansas is likely to lose \$1 billion in federal Medicaid funding thus forcing the need to implement massive Medicaid reform in Kansas.

Comprehensive Medicaid reform in Kansas has not occurred in 45

years. State spending on Medicaid alone has increased over \$400 million in just a few years and totals \$2.8 billion when federal dollars are combined with state funds.

Western Kansas Water

Over the summer Governor Brownback hosted an economic summit focusing on protecting and ensuring the future of the Ogallala Aquifer. The intent of the Governor was to meet with local shareholders to get their input of how the state can assist with protecting the Aquifer.

Redistricting

Every 10 years the state of Kansas, and the other 49 states, redraws its Congressional and Legislative boundaries based on the most recent census figures. Each state has its own unique process for how they redraw their congressional and state district boundaries.

Kansas is the only state in the nation who readjusts the census figures for military personnel and university students who do not consider Kansas home and, therefore, do not vote in Kansas.

This process helps ensure the population figures used for drawing

district boundaries are as realistic and up to date as possible.

Figures show the population of Kansas has grown in the eastern part of the state while western Kansas continues to struggle with declining population numbers. As a result, projections show one Kansas Senate seat will shift from the west side of the state to the east side of state, as will approximately three Kansas House seats.

The First congressional district needs to pick up around 57,900 voters while the Third congressional district needs shift an estimated 54,300 voters to other congressional districts.

The goal is to have 22,761 persons in each Kansas House district, 70,986 in each Kansas Senate District and 713,280 persons in each of the four Congressional districts.

If you have comments or questions please contact me at (785) 899-4700 or email me at rick.billinger@house.ks.gov or my mailing address is Rick Billinger, P.O. Box 594, Goodland, KS 67735.

Goodland High School teams sixth in math relays

The Goodland High School students that competed in the 33rd annual Fort Hays Math Relays at Hays on Thursday, Nov. 10, came in sixth in the 2A/3A division with 42 points.

The following students placed in the top six. In the tenth grade division was answered by the members taking first in using number sense, first in algebraic manipulations, sixth in informal geometry and fourth in the applications of algebra. In the tenth grade division the team of Brianna White, Amber Perdew and Amber Smith took first in using number

sense and the team of Ellie House, Berkley White and Perdew took third in informal geometry and the term of Jarod Lake, Perdew and Berkley White tied for second in calculations with calculators.

Goodland High School Senior Reed Bellamy; Junior Dustin Wendt; Sophomores House, Lake, Smith, Perdew, Brianna White and Berkley White; and Freshmen Britney Brown, Tanner Helton, Nicole Sederstrom and Kristina Stasser.

The results for rest of the 2A/3A were Thomas More Prep-Marian in first with 137 points, Minneapolis

second with 64.5 points, Trinity Catholic of Hutchinson third with 57.5, Russell fourth with 56, Skyline of Pratt fifth with 43, Ellsworth seventh with 42 points, Decatur Community at Oberlin eighth with 34, Sacred Heart of Salina ninth with 31, Ness City 10th with 15, Central Plains 11th with 11, Kingman 12th with 11, Republic County of Belleville 13th with 7, Norton 14th with 2.5, Phillipsburg 15th with 1 and Ellinwood 16th with none.

Goodland High School math teachers are Donald Raymer, Danielle Moore and Jackie Elliott.

Overall school awards were based on the total points compiled by entrants (both individual and team) from the school, with nine points awarded for each first place finish, seven points for each second

place finish, five points for each third place finish, three points for each fourth place finish, two points for each fifth place finish, and one point for each sixth place finish. For the purpose of determining

school awards only, schools will be considered in three size categories. Schools were divided with 1A being one group; 2A, and 3A being the second group; and 4A, 5A and 6A the third group.

4-h clubs

Prairie Dale

The regular monthly meeting of the Prairie Dale 4-H Club was held on Sunday, Nov. 13, at the Sherman County 4-H building. This was their annual 'Parent Night' meeting. Parent President Cesar Miller called the meeting to order. He led the club in the flag salute and club pledge. Roll call was answered by the members answering "I am thankful for..." There were 17 members, 14 parents and one leader present.

Parent Secretary Carrie Peter read the minutes and they were approved as read. Parent treasurer Melvin Crow reviewed the finances. Laura McClung, reporter, stated an article was submitted to the newspaper. Jonah McClung gave a report of the 4-H council meeting. He reminded everyone of the food drive, Saturday, Dec. 3. He also reported that our club was in charge of the Spring Show this year.

Leader Julie Crow reported that Jonah McClung and Brooke Lockhart were 4-H ambassadors. Mantel Crow won an award for outstanding junior Kansas 4-H Award Portfolio. Jonah McClung was also elected vice-president of 4-H council. She announced the Coon and Crow families are in charge of the Christmas party this year. Julie Crow invited everyone to meet at the 4-H building on Sunday, Dec. 11, to make gingerbread houses. She also encouraged all members to sign up for committees and meeting talks.

The club members took care of some unfinished business by electing Gentry Deeds as song leader, Trent Coon as recreation leader and Dillon Gillming as parliamentarian. A second leader is still being sought. For the new business, parent treasurer Melvin Crow present three outstanding bills. It was voted on and approved to pay them.

For the program, parent Carrie Peter gave a demonstration on "How to fold a 12 inch by 12 inch paper into a gift box." Parent Laura McClung gave a safety talk on sledding. Parent Scott Lockhart led the members in a game of "Simon Says."

It was moved and seconded to adjourn the meeting by saying the club motto and putting up chairs. Prior to the meeting the club held their annual potluck soup supper. The next meeting will be Sunday, Dec. 11. The club will have their annual Christmas party.

Evan Peter, reporter

Sunflower 4-H Club officer training

Ten members of the Sunflower 4-H Club attended the 4-H Officer Training event held on Sunday, Nov. 6, at the 4-H Building. The training event was organized and conducted by the 4-H Junior Leaders.

The meeting started with the installation of officers for each 4-H club. Next, officers attended a short training session for their office. A Junior Leader led each training session. After the training, the whole group played Four Corners and the junior leaders conducted a mock meeting. To end the event the group played Musical Chairs and enjoyed cookies and ice cream floats.

Ryan Berls, Reporter

Sunflower 4-H Club

Several parents and members of the Sunflower 4-H Club met on Sunday, Oct. 30, at the United Methodist Church Fellowship Hall for the annual 4-H Achievement Awards program. Jake and Ashley Anderson assisted members of the Prairie Dale 4-H Club in the presentation and retirement of the flags. Awards for the 2010-2011 4-H year

were presented.

Club leader, Cris Wilson was presented with the Friend of 4-H Award. State Sportfishing awards were presented to Christopher and Ryan Berls. Achievement Pins presented were: Membership - Mary Kate Gerber, Saige Newman, and Sean Sains; Bronze - Dalton Arntt, Ryan Berls, and Robbie Lawson; Emerald - Christopher Berls and Ryan Volk; Silver - Ashley Anderson and Kinsey Volk.

Members who received County Project Awards included Ryan Berls, Robbie Lawson, Savannah Bassett, Simon Bassett, Sean Sains, Ashley Anderson, Saige Newman, Kinsey Volk, Dalton Arntt, Christopher Berls, and Ryan Volk. Christopher Berls also received Honorable Mention for Intermediate Outstanding KAP. Sunflower 4-H Club received awards for Best Secretary's Book, Best Treasurer's Book and Honorable Mention for Best Historian's Book.

Refreshments were served by members of the Prairie Dale and Sunflower 4-H Clubs.

Ryan Berls, Reporter



Time is running out!

Reduce Your Taxes

Colby Community College Tax Credits are still available

Receive a **60%** Kansas State Income Tax Credit on 2011 returns. Depending on your income, you may be eligible to receive a deduction resulting in further savings on your Federal Income Tax.

	Examples	
Contribution to CCC	\$10,000	\$1,000
Less:		
Tax Credit, State of Kansas (60%)	(\$6,000)	(\$600)
Approximate Savings on Federal Income Tax*	(\$2,500)	(\$250)
Estimated Net Cost for Contribution	\$1,500	\$150

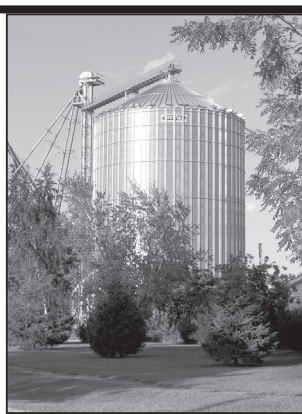
All donations are eligible (no minimum).

For tax credit details contact Chief Financial Officer Alan Waites at (785) 460-5402 or Nick Wells, Foundation Director, at (785) 460-4684.

*Based on taxable income above \$33,950 (single) or \$67,900 (married). Filing jointly (both have a "marginal tax rate" of 25%). Tax savings could be greater based on higher taxable income, thereby lowering the overall net cash flow for a contribution.



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