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## Legislative Update from Senator Kelly Kultala

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### COMMITTEES CONTINUE TO MEET

I serve on the Transportation Committee, Ethics & Elections Committee, Local Government Committee, Ways & Means Committee, Utilities Committees and several joint committees...and WOW the schedule has really picked up. I spend most of the week in committee meetings all day, where a number of bills now have scheduled hearings. Next week I will add Ways & Means subcommittee meetings to this schedule.

To follow bills as they are introduced, go to <http://kslegislature.org/li/> and click on the “Bills & Laws” link. You are also welcome to testify before a committee on any issue important to you (a written copy of your testimony is required at least 24 hours prior to the committee hearing).

If you have any questions about testifying or about bills in general, please feel free to contact my office at 785-296-7357. Or stop by my legislative office, located in room 124-E of the Topeka Statehouse.

Daily calendars, committee and district information are all available online at [www.kslegislature.org](http://www.kslegislature.org). To hear legislative proceedings, just click on the “Listen in Live” link.

## **DISTRICT HAPPENINGS**

- Seventh-grade students from Richard W. Warren Middle School are collecting donated jeans for homeless teenagers. The students will be collecting gently worn jeans until February 12<sup>th</sup>.
- Congratulations to the Leavenworth boys’ bowling team who defeated Shawnee Mission West 2359-2094. This was the boys’ second straight win at home.
- Art produced by inmates of the US Leavenworth Federal Prison & the Military US Disciplinary Barracks Prison can be seen at the Hidden Art Locked Away Art Sale at the Riverfront Community Ctr. in Leavenworth. Preview is Friday Feb. 3 from 4-8 pm and the sale is on Sat. Feb. 4 from 9 am – 5

pm.

- Leavenworth Parks & Recreation Department's Spring Bazaar & Flea Market will be held on Sat. Feb. 4 from 8 am – 2 pm at the Riverfront Community Ctr. in Leavenworth.
- Taste of Leavenworth is Feb. 25 at 5:30 pm in the old Sears Center at the Leavenworth Plaza. For more information call 913-682-0290.
- The Surviving Spouse and Family Endowment (SAFE) Fund is sponsoring a \$2500 scholarship contest for high school students. The Ed Wynn/SAFE Memorial Scholarship deadline is April 13, 2012. For more information please contact Sonny Wilson or Amy Macey at 816-960-6800 Mon.-Fri. between 9 am & 4 pm.

### **KDOT ACCELERATES \$50M IN PROJECTS**



In a Statehouse news conference Friday morning, Governor Sam Brownback directed the Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT) to take action on a

T-Works initiative introduced by Democratic legislators last month as part of our job-creating package, “Kansas Jobs First”.

The Accelerated T-Works Act will accelerate late 2012 and 2013 projects, by putting those projects in which the engineering work has already been completed out for bid by February 2012. The T-Works program is slated to spend about \$440 million in 2012 and \$237 million in 2013 on various road projects throughout Kansas.

Even though the Kansas economy is recovering, more than 51,000 Kansas workers remain unemployed. By accelerating the bidding process on dozens of transportation projects throughout the state, we can create thousands of jobs earlier than expected and save money by taking advantage of low material prices.

A full list of accelerated projects in District 1: Northeast can be viewed at [www.kdot.org](http://www.kdot.org). Click on “Accelerated \$50M Preservation Projects 2012” under the News Releases section.

### **HEARING HELD ON GOVERNOR’S EDUCATION PLAN**

Members of the Senate Education Committee were formally presented the governor’s education plan Wednesday afternoon. The Brownback Education Plan would overhaul the state’s current finance formula and set base state aid per pupil at \$4,492 – regardless of a district’s needs. That means weightings for at-risk and bilingual students, and for transportation needs in rural areas, would all be eliminated.

The plan would uncap the local property tax, allowing wealthier school districts to increase their budgets at a much lower tax rate than poorer districts. And because districts with more than 2,550 enrolled students won’t receive additional funding, 75% of Kansas school kids will

be left out.

Cuts to Kansas schools have gone too far in the last few years. But the problem has not been the formula, it has been the lack of funding. The Legislature needs to hold up its end of the bargain and fund the formula properly.

### **BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT ACT WOULD LEVEL PLAYING FIELD**

This session, legislators have been working diligently on an act to help level the playing field for a Kansas small businesses owner.

The Kansas Small and Disadvantaged Business Development Act would create a business program within the Kansas Department of Commerce that reaches out to small-, women- and minority-owned businesses. A business owner would then be given an opportunity to participate in state and post-secondary education institution contracts for goods and services.

The bill has already been introduced in both the House and Senate, and should have a hearing in either the House Committee on Commerce and Economic Development or the Senate Commerce Committee in the next two weeks.

Numerous studies have shown that small businesses, women and minorities have been deeply affected by the economic recession. While women make up more than 50 percent of the Kansas population, there are currently fewer than 60,000 female-owned businesses in our state. Even fewer have a person of color at the helm – of the 237,000 small businesses in Kansas, just 14,000 are owned by a minority.

This program would make it easier for women, minorities and small business owners to find new business ventures

that will result in more employment opportunities.

### **SENATE BILL WOULD ALLOW IN-STORE LIQUOR SAMPLINGS**

A bill making its way through the legislature would allow liquor stores to offer samples of certain products to customers before purchase. Currently, state law prohibits the consumption of alcoholic beverages inside stores. As a result, proprietors hold tasting events nearby, but not inside their establishments.

If passed, SB277 would allow customers to sample one individual portion, limited to one-half ounce for distilled spirits, one ounce for wine, and two ounces for beer or malt beverage.

ABC Director Doug Jorgensen said the agency was neutral on the legislation. Liquor stores are already subject to state inspections, so no extra work is anticipated. A Senate committee hearing is expected in the next couple of weeks.

### **LEGISLATORS BRIEFED ON HUMAN TRAFFICKING**

Legislators were briefed on an issue that has garnered statewide attention recently: human trafficking. The crime was pulled into the spotlight after Kansas received poor grades last year from organizations who monitor human trafficking around the country.

Presenters from the Sedgwick County District Attorney's office and victim services organizations suggested that current laws should be strengthened to include criminal penalties for "facilitators" of trafficking (those who assist in trafficking, but do not engage in sexual activity or monetarily benefit from the crime). Lawmakers were also encouraged to increase penalties for patronizing

prostitutes, which would reduce demand for human traffickers.

I'm sure that this issue will continue to receive attention from legislators in both chambers. I will keep you posted if any legislation is introduced to help deter the perpetrators of this terrible crime.

### **JOBS DATABASE FOR VETERANS**

Soldiers and veterans looking for employment opportunities now have access to more than 2,500 employers from across the country, thanks to a web site developed by the Employer Partnership of the Armed Forces. More than 10,000 soldiers, their families and veterans currently participate in the program, which has more than 500,000 job posts.

To access more information, visit

<https://www.employerpartnership.org/>.

### **NOTABLE KANSAS EVENTS ANNOUNCED**

As part of the state's commemoration of the Kansas sesquicentennial, the State of Kansas will recognize the top 12 events in Kansas history. In chronological order, these events include:

**Overland Trails:**On September 1, 1821, the first party left Missouri headed for Mexico on the Santa Fe Trail. This event was the official opening of the Santa Fe Trail, which helped the nation expand to new territories and initiate trade with neighboring countries.

**Indian Removal:**On November 4, 1838, the Pottawatomie Trail of Death ended in Kansas. Under the Indian Removal Act, 859 Pottawatomie people were forced to walk more than 600 miles to Kansas. As many

as 90 different tribes were removed to Kansas in the mid-19th century, and hundreds of native people lost their lives.

**Kansas-Nebraska Act:** On May 30, 1854, U.S. President Franklin Pierce signed the Kansas-Nebraska Act into law. The act created the Kansas Territory which became a battleground for proslavery and antislavery forces known as “Bleeding Kansas.”

**Railroad Development:** On February 11, 1859, the Kansas Territorial Legislature chartered the Santa Fe Railway and helped launch railroad development in the state. Railroads brought jobs and settlers to the state and influenced town development.

**Women's Rights:** On July 5, 1859, discussions and debates of the Wyandotte constitution included women’s rights. Provisions regarding child custody, property rights for married women, and equality in matters pertaining to public schools were included in the final draft of the state constitution approved by voters in Kansas Territory and Congress. This placed Kansas ahead of most other states in terms of women’s rights and set a course for future advancements.

**Wheat Industry:** On March 5, 1862, the Kansas Legislature formed the Kansas Agricultural Society. This organization would later become the State Department of Agriculture, and it vigorously promoted Kansas to prospective settlers, including Volga German farmers with agricultural skills. Just a few years after successfully recruiting these immigrants to Kansas, the state surpassed other states in production of winter wheat.

**Cattle Drives:** On September 5, 1867, the first load of cattle to be shipped via rail left Kansas. This positioned Kansas as a leader in the beef industry; first as the place where Texas cattle were driven to be shipped to the East, then as a producer of quality beef from shorthorn cattle

and Herefords.

**Reform Movements:** On January 1, 1881, Kansas adopted prohibition as part of the state's constitution. Alcohol consumption was just one of the many health and safety concerns that reformers campaigned against. Others, such as the public drinking cup, child labor, and flies led the way to national change.

**Aviation Industry:** On January 26, 1925, the Travel Air Manufacturing Company was established. Aviation innovators Clyde Cessna, Walter Beech, and Lloyd Stearman partnered to create this company and later went on to form their own aviation manufacturing operations, making Kansas the "Air Capital of the World."

**Dust Bowl:** On April 14, 1935, a massive front darkened the entire Midwest in clouds of dust. The day became known as Black Sunday. Drought conditions, over grazing, and large portions of cultivated land led to the Dust Bowl in the Midwest. Although these storms had devastating effects, they led to soil conservation movements such as planted windbreaks and strip and contour farming.

**Rural Electrification:** On April 1, 1938, rural electrification reached Kansas. Electricity allowed farmers and families to take advantage of modern conveniences and increase productivity. Rural farmers were able to compete with their urban counterparts and rural schools also benefited from the service.

**Brown v. Board of Education:** On May 17, 1954, the U.S. Supreme Court announced its unanimous ruling on Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka. This landmark decision laid a foundation of equal rights and opportunities for all. It demonstrated that educational opportunity and achievement are core values. It also recognized that education can be a great equalizer among people of different races, classes, and

backgrounds.

### **IMPORTANT STATE PHONE NUMBERS**

Here is a list of numbers I often receive requests for during session. I hope you will find this information helpful.

Attorney General

(888) 428-8436

Child Abuse Hotline

(800) 922-5330

Crime Tip Hotline

(800) 572-7463

Crime Victim Referral

(800) 828-9745

Driver's License Bureau

(785) 296-3963

KPERS

(888) 275-5737

Governor's Office

(877) 579-6757

Highway Conditions

(800) 585-7623

Housing Hotline

(800) 752-4422

Department on Aging

(800) 432-3535

Kansas Jobs  
(785) 235-5627

Kansas Lottery  
(785) 296-5700

Legislative Hotline  
(800) 432-3924

School Safety Hotline  
(877) 626-8203

Social Security  
(800) 772-1213

SRS  
(785) 296-1491

Tax Refund Status Info  
(800) 894-0318

Taxpayer Assistance  
(785) 368-8222

Unclaimed Property  
(800) 432-0386

Vital Statistics  
(785) 296-1400

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