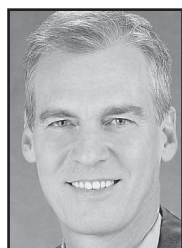


Outgoing governor reflects on time in office

Our announcement that we secured an agreement to keep Hawker Beechcraft in Wichita caps the end of four very rewarding years. It's been an honor to serve as both your lieutenant governor and governor. A real honor.



Mark Parkinson
• Kansas Governor

As this term ends, many have asked me what accomplishments I'm pleased about and what issues I wish we could have worked on but didn't.

I want to answer both of those questions for a couple of reasons. First, to outline what has been important to us. Second, because I won't comment on Kansas public policy for quite a while after I leave office. I believe we need to give the new governor the opportunity to work on the challenges Kansas continues to face without unsolicited advice, so I'm going to follow the tradition of prior governors and stay out of the way.

What I'm Really Pleased About
We accomplished more than I thought possible when I started this adventure with Gov. Sebelius four and a half years ago. In no particular order, here are the 10 achievements that jumped out at me in thinking about this administration:

1. Steering the state budget through a challenging time. I've written on this at length, so I won't belabor it. Suffice it to say that I cut state spending more than any governor in Kansas history. By doing it early and spreading it into several years, we avoided the dangerous budget cliff many states are currently facing. Then we raised the sales tax for 36 months. This protected our schools, universities, safety net for the elderly and disabled and general state services. There are challenges ahead, but Kansas is in a better position than most other states.

2. The growth of wind farms. When I became lieutenant governor we only had 365 megawatts of wind power, about 3.5 percent of our electric use. We now have 1,012 megawatts online and several hundred have been announced and will soon begin construction. The big breakthrough came with the Sunflower settlement, which resulted in passage of a law that requires utilities to be at 20 percent renewable power by 2020. Westar plans to add 369 megawatts of wind energy to its portfolio, and there will be additional advancements in the future.

3. The development of major transmission lines in Western Kansas. In order to take wind power to its full potential, we need to build huge power lines to move the power from western Kansas to the east. Two major lines are under development in western Kansas and will allow Kansas the opportunity to provide clean energy to the rest of the country for many years.

4. The start of a renewable energy manufacturing industry. The state's final leg of becoming a renewable energy leader was to recruit renewable energy component manufacturing companies. Other states had jumped ahead of Kansas because we didn't have certain policies, so companies doubted our commitment. We now have the Siemens plant in Hutchinson and many others under development.

5. National Bio and Agro-Defense Facility. Gov. Sebelius appointed a blue ribbon team to push this project that included business leaders, public officials, Republicans, Democrats, and Kansans from every corner of the state. The result was that we beat out 29 other proposals. But this isn't done yet — we still have an annual battle to obtain the money from the federal government. But, when the facility is built, it will further cement the importance of our animal health corridor.

6. Working with the Board of Regents to reinvigorate our universities. The Regents and I had become concerned with the national ranking of our universities. In my view, we had drifted because of a lack of focus on what really matters. At a Regents retreat in 2009, I emphasized the importance of strategic planning to improve our retention rates, graduation rates and placement of graduates. Planning right now will result in major benefits for the state for years to come.

7. Economic development wins. Highlights include Black and Veatch, Cerner, Bombardier LearJet, and just last week, Hawker Beechcraft. We have a great set of tools to win these battles, but it is also very important that the state not overpay. I believe we hit the right balance.

8. The public smoking ban. The ban will save lives and an overwhelming majority of Kansans wanted it. I know the exceptions are indefensible, but the legislative process is about compromise. Sometimes you have to take what you can get.

9. The new transportation plan. Comprehensive transportation plans passed in 1989 and 1999 ran out, and I wanted the momentum to continue. They have created real economic development and made our roads safer. We passed a new plan that will create or keep 175,000 jobs and continue our success of having the best roads in the country.

10. Keeping Kansas a great place to do business. Various national groups have consistently ranked Kansas a top 10 state to open and operate a business. Gov. Sebelius should receive much of the credit for policies to reduce business taxes.

What I Wish We Could Have Worked On

There are two policy areas I wanted to get to, but could not. Both are solvable problems, but require state funding. Unfortunately, our budget crunch made that impossible.

1. The waiting list for Kansans with disabilities who need services. The services that Kansas provides for individuals with disabilities are incredible. Unfortunately, we don't have enough money to take care of everyone. At least several thousand Kansans need services we can't pay for. The most vulnerable citizens, through no fault of their own, need help, and they are not getting. I hope that as state revenues recover this is the first priority of the new governor and future legislatures.

2. Kansas Public Employees Retirement System underfunding. Hundreds of thousands of Kansans that serve our state depend on the system to secure their retirement, and it is not funded properly. This is true for a variety of reasons, and they are all fixable. Unfortunately, part of the fix will require the State to provide money. Another part will require people in the system to give more and accept less. Again, I had no money to bring a potential solution to the table. I'm confident that future administrations will focus on this issue, and I am hopeful they will reach a solution.

Thanks
Let me first thank my family. It's been an amazing adventure, and they have been with me all the way. Stacy made us all proud as First Lady, and I'm proud of the way our children have handled the spotlight.

Second, I want to thank our Cabinet and staff. Despite the rhetoric, state employees are not overpaid. In fact, for many jobs, the pay is so low that it's tough to find great people. We found great people.

Third, I want to thank our legislators. They make sacrifices the public does not understand. They are paid about \$15,000 a year, leave their families and communities and do the best they can under tough circumstances. While there has been much written about the moderate coalition we created, it is also true that we worked with every legislator on at least one of the 10 accomplishments I've written about.

Finally, I want to thank the person that it all started with. Four and a half years ago, Gov. Sebelius contacted me and asked me if I would consider a unique partnership. I was as shocked as anyone. But she believed the opportunity to break down partisan walls

was worth the considerable risk. And she was right. Whether it was her bipartisan cabinet, her bipartisan commissions, or ultimately my selection, she showed us what is possible when we all work together. She proved what we all knew already — that when

Kansans pull together and ignore partisan bickering, we can take on any challenge.

It's been great and I hope to see you down the road.

Ad astra per aspera.

Mark

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