

Legislative information from the State Senate chamber

Turnaround is Monday, Feb. 22, and all non-exempt bills must be out of committee by the start of session on Wednesday, Feb. 17 and read in.

Senate Bill 387 — Claims Against the State: The bill authorizes expenditures from existing sources for the payment of specific claims against the State of Kansas. Agencies affected by the bill include Department of Revenue, Department of Corrections, Ellsworth Correctional Facility, Hutchinson Correctional Facility, El Dorado Correctional Facility, Lansing Correctional Facility and Topeka Correctional Facility. SB 387 passed 40 to 0 on Thursday.

Senate Bill 410 — Electronic Payments: The bill would allow state agencies to accept payments by debit card. The measure requires state agencies to be notified in writing within 14 days when a payment from a debit card has been refused of the payee name, address, purpose, payment amount, date refused and reason for payment refusal. The holder of the refused debit card would have 30 days after the notice is issued to make the payment. If the holder fails to make payment within the 30 days, the agency is entitled to a \$100 civil penalty. SB 410 passed 40 to 0 on Wednesday.

Senate Bill 452 — Purchase or Consumption of Alcoholic Beverages: SB 452 prohibits anyone under 18 years old, who is arrested for possessing, consuming, obtaining, purchasing, or attempting to purchase alcoholic beverages from being detained or placed in jail. The person would be prohibited from being detained or placed in a juvenile detention facility for a period exceeding 24 hours, excluding Saturdays, Sundays and legal holidays. Existing state law allows for youth to be placed in detention for possessing and/or consuming alcohol which is a violation of the federal Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDA). SB 452 passed 40 to 0 on Thursday.

Senate Bill 479 — Unclaimed Property, Disclosure to State Treasurer: The bill would allow the Secretary of Revenue to provide information to the State Treasurer for locating owners of unclaimed property. Current law requires the Department of Revenue to keep income tax return information confidential with certain exceptions and the bill includes the State Treasurer as an exemption. Information that could be provided to the State Treasurer includes the current and prior addresses of taxpayers, spouses, dependents and other associated persons who may have knowledge on the location of the unclaimed property. SB 479 passed 40 to 0 on Thursday.

Senate Concurrent Resolution 1615 — Tenth Amendment Sovereignty: The resolution is nonbind-



Ralph Ostmeyer
state senator

ing and declares the sovereignty of Kansas and serves as a Notice and Demand to the federal government to immediately cease and desist all mandates that are beyond the scope of the powers delegated under the United States Constitution. In addition, the resolution objects to all federal legislation that requires states to comply under threats of penalties or sanctions or requirements that states pass legislation to maintain certain funding. SCR 1615 passed 33 to 7 on Thursday.

School reorganization
The Legislative Division of Post Audit reviewed potential cost savings from reorganization of Kansas school districts. Their study released this week of the potential for savings from consolidating school districts involved statistical analysis and numerous assumptions about how districts could be reorganized, and costs associated with reorganization. Legislative Post Audit developed two scenarios to illustrate school district consolidation:

1. Consolidate districts that didn't meet the original consolidation requirements of the 1960's, with a reduction of districts from 293 to 266
2. Consolidate districts with fewer than 1,600 students, with a reduction of districts to 152.

Scenario one had potential savings of \$18 million, would close 50 schools, and have 230 fewer teachers and administration. The second scenario proposal had costs savings of \$138 million, closing about 100 school districts and 1,532 fewer teachers and administrators.

Potential cost savings to the state was \$15 million for scenario one and \$129 million for scenario two, greater due to less low-enrollment funding. Students transported under scenario one were 900 and under scenario two 7,000. Both plans would most likely involve new capital expenditures for new or expanded buildings, and bond and interest aid.

Legislative Post Audit did not recommend adopting either scenario, but recommended the Legislature consider limiting or eliminating the provision allowing districts to enter into long term inter-district contracts to share entire grades, and consider strengthening the incentives for encouraging districts to voluntarily consolidate.

I would encourage districts to take advantage of the Legislative Division of Post Audit's services to have your district audited, checking for cuts that could be made and getting their recommendations on how

the identified problems could be resolved. I will support policies that educate and prepare our children for the next level. Our rural schools are second to none, and I plan to keep it that way!

The Kansas State Board of Education has made it clear they hope Legislators make decisions based on accurate information, protecting the future of all students. There is plenty of information for or against these issues, and I agree we, as Legislators, should keep an open mind and have a good debate.

The stated Conclusion of the Legislative Division of Post Audit was:

"Like the rest of the country, Kansas currently is facing its worst budget crisis in decades. The Legislature has made significant budget cuts in all areas of government, including the K-12 education system. The analyses we performed in this audit showed reorganizing the system so there are fewer school districts has the potential to significantly reduce the cost of the system overall. Equally significant issues would need to be addressed before any widespread reorganization could happen, including the impact on students, individual districts, and local communities.

"The State's current policy is to let school districts, school boards, and local communities be the ones making the difficult and decisive decisions about consolidating districts, closing schools and reducing staff accordingly, never losing sight of the goal of providing high-quality education to their students. While the State offers some incentives to encourage voluntary consolidation, adopting stronger incentives could encourage many more districts to consolidate voluntarily — especially those that are struggling financially."

Although this is being written on Friday, by the time you read this update we will have completed our first Town Hall Meeting tour in the 40th Senate District. I am sure there was lively discussion on the issues before us, with successful sharing of ideas. The following is our schedule of the remaining Town Hall Meetings. As is our habit, information will be presented through these meetings on many of the issues being considered in Topeka, and hopefully discussions will follow on anticipated issues and their impact on all of us. Everyone is invited to attend the town hall meetings.

In Goodland 7 to 8 a.m. on Saturday, Feb. 27, at Hank's with Sen. Ostmeyer, Rep. Jim Morrison and Rep. Dan Johnson. In Colby 9:45 to 10:45 a.m. Central Time at Quality Inn.

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County takes low mower bid

MOWER, from Page 1

commissioners wanted her to do with the money. She said Marilyn Bohl wanted to sit down with the commissioners and her to talk about the details of the lease.

Thomas said Bohl wanted to know who would take care of the lawn.

Strnad said the previous motion was to have the lease signed.

Thomas said after the previous meeting no one contacted Bohl and she read about it in the newspaper.

Strnad said she felt if no one had contacted the business she felt they ought to be given to Friday to sign the lease and bring the rent current.

Selby said she would contact the business owners to get the lease signed and tell them they are not going to negotiate further.

Strnad said giving them to Friday would allow Bohl to show it to her attorney.

Thomas said she had done that. The commissioners decided to stay with the lease contract as presented and asked Selby to contact the business owners.

The leases were completed and signed after the meeting on Monday, and the rent had been brought current.

Selby reported she got a call from Attorney Ron Vignery saying the Goodland Regional Medical Center board had asked him to do some research on the funding for the hospital and about what might be in state law.

Strnad said she heard a rumor the hospital did not buy an ambulance. Thomas said that was true and why he and Linin had decided to hold the hospital check and ask them to come to a commission meeting and provide financial information on the ambulance operation.

Strnad asked what the hospital response was to the request.

Linin said the hospital board

wanted the commissioners to attend a board meeting, but the commissioners wanted them to come to a commission meeting.

Strnad asked if the hospital board was aware the commissioners wanted to talk to them.

Selby said Vignery said he was looking at the funding at the request of the board.

McKnight gave the commissioners information on bids for a new boiler for the courthouse.

He said he had contacted Zimmerman about bidding on the boiler, but has not heard from him. He said he had contacted the new plumbing firm opening and was told they did not want to get into something the size of the boiler.

He wanted the commissioners to have a chance to look at the bids he had received before making a decision.

Thomas said they do not have to make a decision right away.

Discussed a policy situation with Curt Way, public works manager. Way said he has two employees who are veterans and one is in the National Guard. He said the two are being asked to provide military honors at funerals. In the past they have been putting the time down as funeral leave, but he did not feel that was right and wanted some direction from the commissioners.

Strnad asked if they were paid for funeral leave.

Way said yes, but felt it would take away from their funeral time if they needed it for a family member.

Thomas suggested leaving them

on the clock and making a note that they were providing military services.

Strnad said she agreed it was giving something back to the veterans.

Way said he would make a note for color guard service.

The commissioners agreed to have Way come up with a recommendation of a bridge to put on the five-year transportation project list.

Way told the commissioners there is a bridge on the list with the bid letting expected to be in May of next year.

He asked the commissioners if they wanted to put something on the list to keep it up to schedule. He said the county gets about \$97,000 a year, and that the county could lose the money if they do not have a project on the list.

He said the commissioners could put another bridge on the list. He said some bridges are deficient and it is time to have them inspected. He said the county has 73 bridges and Penco Engineering can do the inspections.

He said the state inspector was out and pulled seven bridges at random to inspect. He said the bridge issues is going to be more stringent after the bridge collapse in Minnesota.

The commissioners told Way to find a bridge to put on the list.

The commissioners will meet at 7:30 a.m. today, because of the President's Day holiday with the courthouse closed on Monday.

Thank You!



Thank you for participating in the drawing for the Magic Show tickets, and we apologize for the cancellation of the show. Look forward to April, when we expect the show to come to Goodland!

- We also want to congratulate the winners of the drawings. Becky Petracich: Homeland Realty \$50 gift certificate
- Ryan Scott: jewelry from Smitty's Sports/Mann's Jewelry
- Etta Brack: pedicure from Klip n' Kurl Salon
- Nyla Finley: Chamber of Commerce tickets to Magic Show
- Bill Wright: 1 dozen roses from Prairie Rose Floral Co.
- Sandy Timm: balloon bouquet from Jacque's Hallmark Store
- Stacy Colby: 1 year subscription to *The Goodland Star-News*

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