#### We need a judge in each county Supreme Court Chief Justice Lawton Nuss addressed the Legislature on the State of the Judiciary in Kansas, stressing financial concerns, as with almost all Kansas agencies, but his talk included a

request that could hurt our area. Justice Nuss asked that the Legislature give the Judicial Branch the ability to assign and organize judges as its deems best. I personally like having one judge per county.

I know there are many outdoor enthusiasts in my district. I like the proposal that when we purchase our new car tags, there will be a checkoff box to allow us to get a state Parks Pass for \$15. It is another step the Wildlife and Parks Commission has requested to help meet its goal of becoming self-sufficient.

The governor says he plans to repeal the "use it or lose it" law associated with groundwater rights in before I can support it.



**Letter from Topeka** By State Rep. Ward Cassidy ward.cassidy@house.ks.gov

areas closed to new water develop-

has met with some controversy. Like many things this year, it is still a and Standard and Poor's, which say work in progress. Kansas has a longstanding reliance on the three-legs of income, sales, and property taxes to pay for government. Like many of this year's proposals, I will have to learn a lot more about the budget most folks are really not aware of. and how it will affect my district

The governor says he is planning to pay down the state's debt. Part The governor's income-tax plan of this is driven by reports from financial ratings services, Moody that since Kansas has not met our statutory ending-balance requirement, our bond rating might be

Kansas has a large debt load that The next two paragraphs will try to tie this together.

The Expanded Lottery Act Reserve Fund of 2007 collects net gaming revenue from state-owned casinos and electronic gaming machines. These funds were earmarked for the reduction of state debt. infrastructure improvements and reduction of local property taxes. The governor's budget will use

these dollars to pay off "callable debt" (any secured debt in which the state has the right to redeem the debt at a specific price after a specific date). The callable debt he proposes to pay this year is almost \$70 million. Just a few examples: bonds for Statehouse improvements, almost \$7 million: Wildlife and Parks cabins, \$1.8 million; Kansas Public Employee Retirement System, \$36 million; and Kansas State Fair capital improvements, \$11 million.

I have addressed this is to show a little of the complexities of our state budget. I personally believe, if we don't take care of our debt, we will always be burdened with fiscal crisis.

Ward Cassidy of St. Francis, a retired school principal and teacher, is the state representative for the 120th District, covering Decatur, Cheyenne, Rawlins, Norton and Phillips counties. Send e-mails to ward.cassidy@house.ks.gov.

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## Several water measures pending

By SEN. RALPH OSTMEYER

Last summer, Gov. Sam Brownback had a Kansas Water Authority task force meeting at Colby to discuss conservation measures to protect the Ogallala Aquifer.

This stakeholder task force proposed several changes in Kansas water law:

• HB-2451 would amend the ap-

propriation act to eliminate the "use it or lose it" rule in areas closed to new water rights development. • SB-272 would amend provisions for multiyear flex accounts

to expand water management to five-vear periods. • SB-310 provides for Local Enhancement Management Plans that would provide a process for proactive conservation plans with local decision making. These plans could provide corrective measures and

mandatory water-use reductions. A group called Uncork Kansas wants to allow grocery and convenience stores to give consumers the ability to choose where they purchase beer, wine and spirits.

I need to hear from all businesses involved, liquor stores and grocery stores. This issue does not seem to

I have some grocery stores that are interested but very few liquor stores. Then there is some interest in allowing licenses for Class A, beer only, and Class B, wine and beer. The only way to have a Class C license, permitting sale of beer, wine, and spirits, would be to purchase a license from an existing liquor store between Jan. 1, 2013, and Jan. 1, 2016, after which the cap would be lifted, and the number of licenses available would be restricted.

Starting Jan. 1, existing liquor stores would be allowed to sell other SW 10th, Rm 225-E. Topeka, Kan. goods or services, and 3 percent of 66612-150 or Box 97, Grinnell, the liquor enforcement tax revenues Kan. 67738-0097. Call his office at would be distributed to cities and counties that lose sales tax revenue 824-3773, or e-mail him at ralph. due to reduced sales of beer.

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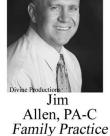


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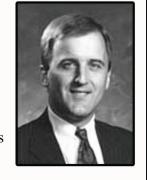
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