



Ernestine Krehbiel
President & Editor

Issue No. 13
April 7, 2013

(Includes additions and comments from President Krehbiel)

ACTION ALERT: SB 63 -SHOULD THE SEC. OF STATE CONTRIBUTE TO KANSAS CANDIDATES?

After the full Senate had amended SB63, prohibiting the Secretary of State from establishing political committees to fund campaigns (other than those supporting a candidate for Secretary of State) the **House Committee on Elections amended it back to original language in the bill, by DELETING THIS PROHIBITION!** (Mr. Kobach, as SOS, was supposed to be neutrally supervising the 2012 Kansas elections but as it was not against Kansas law, **with his own PAC** he contributed to Kansas candidates he favored.) **The League supports the Prohibition of political committees for SOS. This bill will go to conference committee. Contact both your senator and your representative.**

The League opposes almost all parts of this bill (see below) as it is likely to disenfranchise voters who are confused as to where and how to vote--such as with advance ballots. We oppose adding the Secretary of State to those prosecuting voting laws. The Kansas Attorney General and the county district attorneys are more than adequate to handle such cases.

LEGISLATORS ARE ON SPRING BREAK--BACK AT HOME. CONTACT THEM THERE.

2013 LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF KANSAS E-REPORT #13

April 5, 2013 – Paul Johnson

LEGISLATIVE NOTES

BIG DECISIONS DELAYED

The Kansas Legislature was unable to finalize the 2014 State budget and pass a final tax bill before the regular portion of the 2013 Legislative session ended today. These **big decisions will now be settled in the veto session that begins May 8.**

The promise has been that this legislative session would last only 80 days so when the Legislature returns on May 8 – that will be the 75th day with the 80th day being May 13.

The revenues that came into Kansas during March were \$56 million under estimate thus leaving this 2013 Fiscal Year (that ends on June 30) only \$8 million above estimates. The consensus revenue estima-

tors will meet on April 19 to develop new 18 month revenue projections that the Legislature must use to finalize the 2014 State budget. It is possible that these new revenue projections could be lowered by over \$200 million which would fundamentally alter budgetary deliberations and taxation negotiations.

The drop in March revenues was dramatic but possibly caused by delayed federal tax filings.

- The House continues to say that the state sales tax must decline to 5.7% as promised three years ago and that income taxes should decline further only if there is certain growth in revenues to the State.
- The Senate continues to insist on making the 6.3% state sales tax permanent and pass a five year plan to substantially lower individual income tax brackets.
- The Senate wants to complicate the tax debate by reducing in half the Earned Income Tax Credit to 200,000 low income families and using this \$42 million to increase the Homestead Property Tax Relief payments for lower income elderly and disabled from \$700 to \$1,200.

Note: HERE ARE SOME COGENT TALKING POINTS AS YOU CONTACT LEGISLATORS EXPLAINING WHY THE LEAGUE OPPOSES THE TAX CHANGES NOW BEING CONSIDERED.

- The regression of Kansas' tax policy continues on. While Kansas is one of a few states with a full sales tax on groceries, Kansas eliminated the food sales tax rebate in 2013 that had previously softened the impact the sales tax on groceries.
- In 2013, Kansas' renters who are elderly or disabled will no longer qualify for any Homestead Property Tax Relief--only home owners. Kansas has 1.1 million households and 32% of these households are renters. 40% of all renters in Kansas are cost-burdened by paying more that 35% of their income for housing expenses.
- Now the effort in HB 2060 to further punish low income families by cutting the Kansas Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) from 17 percent of the federal credit to 9 percent taking an average of \$200 in EITC from these families who often work at minimum wage jobs and pay excessive rents. The EITC encourages Kansas families to stay in the workforce. In 2011, 221,371 working families in Kansas claimed the credit and received an average of \$379 per household. The EITC is the nation's single most effective tool for keeping children out of poverty. The Governor proclaims he wants to lower childhood poverty rates in Kansas but his administration proposed complete elimination of the Earned Income Tax Credit last year while maintaining the most regressive tax – the 6.3% state sales tax.

THE BUDGET DELIBERATIONS DRAG ON.

The House continues to favor a 4% **cut in Regents institutions** while the Senate favors only a 2% reduction and the Governor proposed no decrease for the Regents.

The House continues to push \$60 million in **reductions to salaries of state employees**. The Senate and the Governor had far fewer salary reductions.

The Governor and the Senate built a budget on the extra \$270 million from making the state 6.3% sales tax permanent.

Hard to say what Kansas Legislators will do if the consensus revenue estimators lower State revenues by \$200-300 million? It almost certainly means the sales tax will be maintained but possibly for a certain number of years. The Governor's wish of having \$450 million in an ending balance for 2014 will be lowered.

There may be **further transfers from the State Highway Fund** to free up State General Funds for other needs.

The **question remains whether K-12 public education** would be held harmless and all other programs would be cut even further to pay for income tax reductions to the wealthiest Kansans?

The worst case would be for the Kansas Legislature to close their eyes and arbitrarily cut all budgets by a certain percentage – say 5%. After five years of budget and staffing reductions, a tipping point of destruction for many regulatory programs may be reached.

LEGISLATION PASSED AND SENT TO THE GOVERNOR

As of Wednesday April 3, the Governor had signed 7 House bills and 2 Senate bills. There were 21 House bills and 20 Senate bills awaiting the signature of the Governor. To this point, the Governor has not vetoed any bills nor have any bills become law without the Governor's signature.

The first bill signed was **House Bill 2019** that changed the selection of Kansas Court of Appeals judges to gubernatorial selection and confirmation by the Senate. This bill passed the House 73 to 50 and Senate 28 to 12. **The LWVK strongly opposed this as it eliminated merit selection of judges.**

Senate Substitute for House Bill 2022 eliminates automatic deductions from employees for certain employee organizations such as teacher unions.

House Bill 2252 eliminates the statute of limitations for prosecution of rape and aggravated criminal sodomy.

House Bill 2201 – Wipes out 80 years of requirement that phone co. provide phone lines to rural areas. This bill frees ATT and all telecommunications providers from having to provide landline service to all customers in their coverage area or provide Lifeline service to the poor who qualify for subsidies. After the conference committee, the Senate has now voted 37 to 3 for the conference report. The House originally voted for it 118 to 1 so it is expected to pass. The deregulation will go ahead while the study is being completed. [This **bill was WRITTEN by ATT** ! This eliminates the phone companies' requirement since the 1930s to provide rural service if they are going to provide service to the cheaper-to-do urban areas.]

Senate Bill 124 – Kansas Restraint of Trade Act – amends antitrust law in Kansas. The House made certain major changes to the Senate bill. Now in conference committee.

SB 197 (and HB 2157) --DEAD Dental Help idea. Would have allowed Dental Practitioners (like hygienists) to help treat state's poor--28,000 in 37 counties with no dentist who is part of the Medicaid/KanCare provider network. More than 28,000 KanCare beneficiaries live in one of these 37 counties. Dentists lobbied this idea to death. Kansas Action for Children has info for each county.

Most of the election bills that move the date of elections have stalled. There were a number of changes made to SB 63 (other than whether or not the Sec. of State could fund preferred candidates from his own PAC as discussed at the top) by the House such as:

House amended the bill to reduce the felony severity level of penalty in the bill of the following crimes:

- Voting more than once,
- Advance voting violations
- Voting without being qualified, --define the crime as voting or attempting to vote in any election district when not lawfully registered voter in that district, or voting or attempting to vote at any election by a person who is not a U.S. citizen, or who does not otherwise qualify as an elector.[What will happen to people who go to the wrong precinct or who THINK they are registered?]
- Election tampering,
- False impersonation of a voter

Kobach's election crimes bill, SB 63, will probably pass in the veto session

The League opposes almost all parts of this bill as it is likely to disenfranchise voters who are confused as to where and how to vote--such as with advance ballots. We oppose adding the Secretary of State to those prosecuting voting laws as the county district attorneys and the Attorney General are more than adequate to handle such cases. We oppose the right of the Sec. of State to have any influence in the outcomes of elections by using political committee to contribute to Ks. candidates.

There have been only two voting impersonation cases in Kansas at least back to 1998 (one was mother who forged college son's signature while he told her by phone how to mark his absentee ballot) so this provision is not expected to cost the state anything unless it is sued for false arrests of confused voters.

The House Elections Committee also adopted provisions that would take away voting rights for four years of any person convicted of an election crime.

Paul comments: **The court docket fee increase bill has yet to pass but is desperately needed** to fund the courts. The Governmental Ethics Commission fee increase bill has stalled and some funding solution for 2015 and on must be found.

Kansas Action for Children (KAC) This Week at the Statehouse

Conference Committees: A number of conference committees have begun meeting to resolve differences between the House and Senate versions of bills, including those dealing with the budget and tax policy. We expect most of these conference committees to finish their work by the close of the regular legislative session at the end of next week. However, several exceptions, including the tax conference committee, are likely to continue their work during the Veto Session in May.

Early Childhood: The **budget conference committee** began meeting this week to negotiate the differences between the House and Senate appropriations bills. The Senate budget provides full funding for early childhood as well as the governor's reading initiative. The House version of the budget also funds existing early childhood programs but sweeps the \$7 million a year allocation for the governor's reading initiative into the State General Fund. The conference committee has not reached an agreement yet, but

KAC is urging negotiators to take the Senate position on the Children’s Initiatives Fund and funding for early childhood programs. The conference committee is expected to resume meeting on Monday.

KIDS Higher Education Savings Match Program: The budget conference committee agreed this week to provide \$350,000 in funding for the **KIDS** program. This is a cut from the \$720,000 maximum that could be spent on the program next year. However, it is a big improvement from the House recommendation, which provided no funding for KIDS. Meanwhile HB 2371, which would eliminate the program, continues to await action by the full House.

Earned Income Tax Credit: The Senate Committee on Assessment and Taxation **amended the contents of SB 232 into HB 2060** this week. This combines the policy to cut the state EITC from 17 percent to 9 percent of the federal credit with a policy prohibiting prisoners from receiving the Food Sales Tax Rebate this year. The next step for HB 2060 is consideration by the full Senate. KAC opposes cuts to the EITC.

Child and Dependent Care Credit: The Senate Committee on Assessment and Taxation passed **SB 106** this week. This bill would restore the CDCC, which was eliminated in the governor’s tax package last year. KAC supports restoring the CDCC.

KanCare Oversight: The House and Senate health conference committee reached agreement on the terms of **HB 2025**, which creates legislative oversight for KanCare. The agreed-to bill will allow for up to six meetings throughout the year. KanCare is the source of health insurance for more than 250,000 Kansas children, making legislative oversight a critical check and balance. Kansas Action for Children testified in support of HB 2025 in the House and Senate.

MORE FROM PRESIDENT ERNESTINE KREHBIEL

- House voted 95-26 to legalized switch blades and stiletto knives! (Oh, my!)
- Car Dealer Sen. Donovan introduced and got passed in the Senate a bill lowering property taxes on all new and late model cars! (Oh, my, oh, my!)
- I think the key education bills in conference committees, ironing out the differences between the two Houses, are the reading retention for 1st grade who don't pass the test, the ancillary weighting and increased local tax levy and the smoke and mirror bill raising the local LOB 10% and counting it for the base state aid per pupil. **There is no new funding for schools.**

Local legislative contact information:

Senator	francisco, marci (D)	(785) 842-6402	marci.francisco@senate.ks.gov
Senator	Holland, Tom (D)	(785) 865-2786	tom.holland@senate.ks.gov
Senator	Hensley, Anthony (D)	(785) 232-1944	anthony.hensley@senate.ks.gov
Representative	Wilson, John (D)	(785) 218-7288	john.wilson@house.ks.gov
Representative	O'Brien, Connie (R)	(913) 706-2396	connie.obrien@house.ks.gov
Representative	Ballard, Barbara (D)	(785) 841-0063	barbara.ballard@house.ks.gov
Representative	Sloan, Tom (R)	(785) 841-1526	tom.sloan@house.ks.gov
Representative	Davis, Paul (D)	(785) 749-1942	paul.davis@house.ks.gov
Representative	Corbet, Ken (R)	(785) 256-6444	ken.corbet@house.ks.gov