

March 18, 2016



NEWS FROM THE CAPITOL

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As the Legislature quickly approaches first adjournment, we have been extremely busy both on the House floor and in committee. This week the House debated a number of bills that were controversial and politically charged. Meanwhile, there has been no debate on the floor to address the challenging and systemic issues facing our state. I was temporarily encouraged by hearings in committee this week that would have increased funding for our schools and reduce the sales tax on food, but neither received a vote (more information below). The Kansas House is scheduled to adjourn next Friday. We will come back in late April for Veto Session.

Bill to Increase Funding for Schools Rejected

This week the House Appropriations Committee held a hearing on a bill to increase funding for education by \$38 million, the Kansas Supreme Court ruled the block grant formula passed last year unconstitutional.

The bill, HB 2731¹, would have reinstated a portion of the old school finance formula that ensured equal funding among all school districts. Under the proposed bill, our school district would have gained over \$226,000.

The chairman of the committee did not bring the bill to a vote. House Education committee is meeting at this moment and there is a bill in the Senate, that does not allocate any new money and will likely not meet constitutional requirements. Lawmakers have until June 30th to fix the problem or our schools could be shut down.

I know how important quality public education is to my district, and I will continue to fight to restore equity, adequacy, and funding for our schools. Our children's futures depend upon it.

Effort to Reduce Sales Tax on Food Failed

The House Tax Committee held hearings this week on a bill to reverse a portion of Gov. Brownback's 2012 tax plan. The bill, HB 2444², would have reinstated the income tax on certain businesses (LLCs, S-Corps) and reduced the sales tax on food from the current rate of 6.5% to 2.6%.

Currently 330,000 businesses in Kansas don't pay any income tax, up from 190,000 when the bill went into effect. As a result, Kansas has lost hundreds of millions of dollars in revenue over the last three years.

To make up for the lost revenue, the legislature passed the largest tax increase in state history last year, raising the sales tax to 6.5%. The increase in the sales tax means Kansans pay more on all their purchases and more on food than in any other state in the nation.

Our state is broke and the Kansas economy is lagging behind others in the region. I'm ready to get our state back on solid financial footing, but the chairman of the tax committee did not call a vote on this bill either.

¹ http://www.kslegislature.org/li/b2015_16/measures/hb2731/

² http://www.kslegislature.com/li/b2015_16/measures/hb2444/

Major Juvenile Justice Reform Passed House

A bill reforming the Kansas juvenile justice system passed on general orders today & will have a final vote in the House next week. Kansas currently has the sixth highest incarceration rate of juveniles in the nation, and this bill seeks to reduce that number by moving away from the practice of incarcerating kids towards evidence based practice that use more community based services.

SB 367³ is the result of an extensive workgroup process that lasted several months and is the first major overhaul of the juvenile justice system in more than 20 years. It is hope this will decrease juvenile recidivism, protect public safety, and reduce spending on practices that are ineffective thus saving taxpayer dollars.

Job Report Points to Troubled Kansas Economy

A labor market report released this week indicates Kansas lost 1,900 jobs in February and the state has lost 5,400 jobs in the last year. As the economies in other states continue to grow, this is troubling news for the state of Kansas and evidence that Gov. Brownback's policies aren't working.

It's time for change. I will continue to focus on policies that move our state forward by investing in research and innovation, bringing new businesses to the state to generate high-paying jobs, and creating responsible and sustainable tax policies.

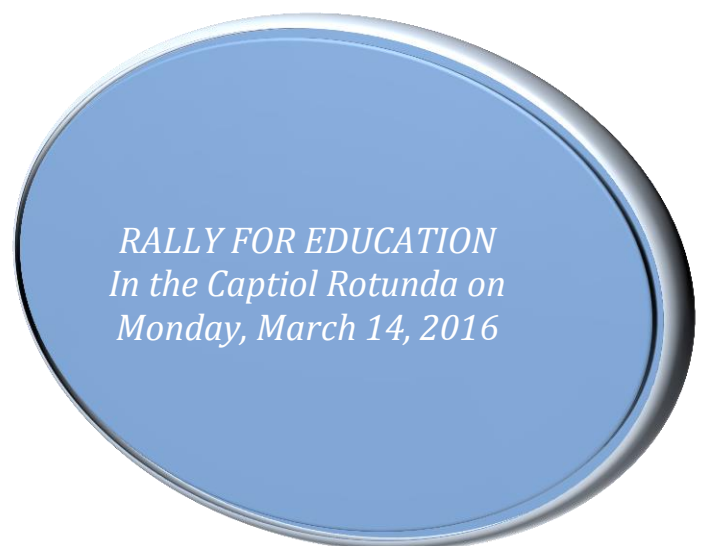
Library Information

Learning Express is an easy to use, online resource that can improve many basic skills: reading, writing, and math. It also offers help in test preparation: GED, college entrance, and graduate school. See the High School Equivalency Center for GED practice tests (click on Prepare for the GED Test, then select the desired subject). Also check out the College Preparation Center (college entrance exams, practice tests, interactive tutorials) and the College Center (skills review, preparation help for graduate school admission exams). Easy registration and self-supplied password is necessary to use this resource and helps you to resume your work.

<http://kslib.info/LearningExpress>

If the page above asks for a Kansas Library eCard number, you may get one at any library in Kansas. Most people will be automatically recognized as inside Kansas and will not need this step. Questions: kslc@library.ks.gov or 785-296-3296.

RALLY FOR EDUCATION



³ http://www.kslegislature.com/li/b2015_16/measures/sb367/

A VISIT TO THE CAPITOL



*(Left to Right)
Sydney, Christine, Amanda,
Norma, Jeff and Charles*



ST PATRICK'S DAY PARADE



*(Left to Right)_
Sydney, Linda, Enid & Nancy*

Keep in touch

It is a special honor to serve as your state representative. I value and need your input on the various issues facing state government. Please feel free to contact me with your comments and questions. My office address is Room 451-S, 300 SW 10th, Topeka, KS 66612. You can reach me at (785) 296-7657 or call the legislative hotline at 1-800-432-3924 to leave a message for me. Additionally, you can e-mail me at sydney.carlin@house.ks.gov. You can also follow the legislative session online at www.kslegislature.org. I'm working on my website, www.sydneycarlin.com. You can connect to my Twitter & Facebook pages through Icons on the site. Even if I haven't posted, there are plenty of interesting news items there.

Proudly representing you in the Capitol

Sydney Carlin, 66th District