

SHANNON FRANCIS

Kansas House District 125



Visitors



Zach Hrencher with the Plains Cotton Coop Association updated me on a study K-State is preparing on the economic competitiveness of cotton versus other crops in Kansas. A new variety that is resistant to drift from herbicides is in development. This new variety and more efficient harvesting operations may make cotton a more attractive crop as our aquifer depletes. Lisa Hatcher and Shirley Scott stopped by on their way to a meeting in Lawrence. It is always a pleasure to visit with you when you are in Topeka. Make sure you call and set up an appointment so I can listen to what's important to you.

State revenues and expenses the big picture

The March revenue numbers came out and were another 11 million short of estimates that had been ratcheted down last November. The Governor had hoped to patch some of the revenue shortfalls with an increase on privilege fees to the three Kan Care companies. Unfortunately I hear that proposal is in

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trouble because of its effects on private market health insurance companies like Blue Cross Blue Shield. The cigarette and alcohol tax increases are failing to gain support as well. At the last budget briefing I attended it was estimated we may have as much as a \$500 million shortfall between revenues and expenses for fiscal year 2016. The Governor reiterated that he did not support rolling back the income tax cuts from the 2012 tax bill. The Governor is willing to look at consumption taxes. Examples of consumption taxes are sales tax, fuel tax, cigarette and alcohol taxes and fees on fertilizer and herbicides. I hear a lot about a 5 cent increase in fuel taxes or another sales tax increase. Some are pushing for removing the homestead exemption on property taxes, and adding a 10 mill statewide increase on property taxes. Others are pushing for additional budget cuts, such as sweeping another \$50 million from road projects, decreasing funding for K-12 schools and colleges and universities to make up the deficit. As part of decreasing funding for higher ed some legislators want to prohibit them from raising fees and tuition. What are your thoughts?

KPERS Bonding

The House and Senate sent **SB228** to the Governor to allow the State to borrow \$1 Billion to make up for prior years unfunded KPERS liability. It also stretched out the amortization period for the unfunded liability by 10 years. **I voted against this measure** and the earlier house measure that borrowed \$1.5 billion. We have a responsibility to our retirees to properly fund the KPERS system, but we should fulfill that obligation in a fiscally-responsible and sustainable way. This bill essentially allows the state to pay off its debt with more debt - the same kind of tactic to kick the can down the road that's been used in Washington for several years now.

UBER

The legislature got email bombed by UBER the taxi cab company of the internet age. There was a serious need to make sure UBER drivers had insurance and background checks. Many UBER drivers don't realize normal car insurance may not cover them when they are driving for hire. As a result of UBER's attempts to influence legislation, I and every other

legislator got 2000 emails in support of UBER. The emails crashed the system at the capitol. Legislators and staff spent hours deleting form emails from people across the state. I was told; many of the emails were initiated by people opening the uber app on their phone.

What's Next

The Legislature is on break so we can hear from you about pending legislation. I will be home until April 28th. The Liberal Chamber of Commerce is trying to set up a legislative forum sometime during this period. I hope to visit with many of you over the next few weeks. April 30th new revenue numbers will be released and the real business of developing a budget and tax plan begins. It will take 63 house members, 21 senators and the Governor to form a consensus on the budget for the next two years. It will be a difficult consensus to build. I think it's imperative that whatever budget is passed, it includes adequate funding for our schools and roads without increasing our property taxes or pushing more unfunded mandates onto our local governments.

"I am not afraid of tomorrow, for I have seen yesterday and I love today!" **William Allen White**

"Since others have to tolerate my weaknesses, it is only fair that I should tolerate theirs." **William Allen White**

Thank you for the opportunity to serve during these challenging times. Our rural communities are the backbone of a strong Kansas. During the session please contact me any time. My email is Shannon.francis@house.ks.gov and my phone number is 785-296-7655.



Paid for by Shannon Francis for State Representative, Lisa Hatcher Treasurer