

SHANNON FRANCIS

Kansas House District 125



Visitors from Home

It was nice visiting this week with Mike O’Kane about all the resources available through the Small Business Development Center. If you need help starting or expanding your business I encourage you to give him a call at (620) 417-1955. Deanna Berry with Russell Child Development came by to discuss early child funding and protecting the Children’s Initiative Fund. I had a great conversation with members of Groundwater Management District 3 about water issues. Kent Dunn is President and our Seward County member. It was also great to visit with Seward County Treasurer Kitty Romine about issues affecting counties and her department.

Judicial Selection

This week the Legislature debated a controversial Constitutional amendment that would have dismantled the Kansas system of judicial selection and replaced it with the same system being used in Washington for our federal courts.

The days and weeks leading up to the debate have been filled with political games and threats. Many Representatives struggled under pressure from Topeka lobbyists and the Governor’s office to implement the federal system. That level of pressure isn’t easy for anyone. But, our Kansas Constitutional system, which has given us fair and impartial courts through three separate but equal branches of government for more than a century, is too important to throw away. That is why I voted against their attempt to dismantle the Kansas system.

My vote has infuriated the lobbyists and politicians in Topeka who didn’t get their way. The tactics they are

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Useful Resources

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[Kansas Charity Check](#)

Useful Phone Numbers

Medicaid Fraud

1-866-551-6328

Welfare Fraud Hotline

800-432-3913

Department On Aging

800-432-3535

using, and will continue to use come election time, are inexcusable and untrue. But, you didn't elect me to vote based on election postcards and the special interests in Topeka. You elected me to vote based on what's best for our families and our community. This is another example of special interest groups trying to make Kansas more like Washington D.C.

Here is why I voted to protect our Kansas system of judicial selection:

Kansas and 23 other states use merit selection to ensure fair and impartial courts.

As Americans, we are granted the right to a fair trial. Our founding fathers recognized that a fair trial – even when it involves trying our most heinous criminals – can only be accomplished through fair and impartial courts. Our system isn't perfect but – unlike the federal system - it is designed to be transparent, accountable and safeguarded from political influence. That's why Kansas along with 23 other states use what's known as the merit selection model for selecting judges.

Under merit selection, Supreme Court justices are vetted by an independent commission that considers each nominee's legal experience and qualifications. The Kansas commission, which is made up of five attorneys and four citizens, then recommends the three most qualified nominees to the Governor for his consideration. The Governor then selects which nominee shall be appointed to the court. While the merit selection model gives the Governor a key role in the process, it does not grant the Governor's office a blank check to appoint friends and political allies at will.

I haven't liked some of the recent decisions handed down by our state courts. They go against my personal beliefs. But, in our system of government, the courts aren't supposed to consider anyone's personal beliefs. The courts are required to base their decisions upon the law and legal precedent.

If you found yourself in a courtroom, would you feel safest knowing the judge was chosen based on his or her legal experience and qualifications? Or knowing the judge was

Child/Adult Abuse Hotline

800-922-5330

Child & Family Services

888-369-4777

Consumer Protection

800-423-2310

Crime Tip Hotline

800-252-8477

Crime Victim Assistance

800-828-9745

Gov- Brownback

800-748-4408

Highway Road Conditions

511 (in Kansas)

Housing Hotline

800-752-4422

KanCare Assistance

866-305-5147

Kansas Lottery

800-544-9467

Legislative Hotline

800-432-3924

Mental Health Services

888-582-3759

School Safety Hotline

877-626-8203

Social Security

800-772-1213

Taxpayer Assistance

785-368-8222

Tax Refund Status

picked by politicians based on who his or her friends were or how much money he or she gave in political contributions?

I believe the checks and balances we have in place to prevent politics in our courts is critical to making sure all Kansans get a fair shake in court, regardless of their political beliefs or the size of their bank account.

Merit selection was implemented by Kansas voters to prevent corruption.

Kansas voters purposefully put our current system in place to derail corruption that had worked its way into courts across the country in the 1950s, including our Kansas courts. It became clear that concentrating too much power in the hands of one person or in the hands of one branch of government was a slippery slope that too easily allowed for cronyism and corruption. Because of that, Kansas voters reacted by approving the merit selection process we have today. As voters, we continue to have the final say with the option to retain or remove the justices every cycle through the election process. The federal model that is being pushed in Topeka concentrates the majority of the power with politicians instead of the people.

Kansas voters have spoken on this issue time and time again. I do not believe the Legislature should attempt to circumvent the voters with a more secretive selection process that concentrates most of the power with the Governor and the Senate. Our citizens and our businesses are best served by our current system, which makes the court directly accountable to the people.

Safeguarding Kansas courts is not a pro-life issue.

Topeka lobbyists are working hard to make the judicial selection issue out to be a pro-life issue because they know that influences voters. They have already indicated they will tell Kansas voters that any legislator who voted against the judicial selection bill is not pro-life. I think that's disgraceful. I encourage you to consider these facts: There are enough pro-life votes in the Kansas Legislature to fully ban abortions in Kansas, yet instead of pushing for a ban on abortions, the lobbyists are pushing for Kansas to implement the federal court model – the same model

800-894-0318

Unclaimed Property

800-432-0386

Unemployment Insurance

800-292-6333

Vital Statistics

785-296-1400

Voter Registration

800-262-8683

Worker's Comp

800-332-0353

that gave us the Roe v. Wade decision in the first place. I remain committed to upholding our community's pro-life values. This vote was about keeping our courts transparent and our judges accountable, and making sure politics are not injected into our courts.

The fight will not end here. Those in Topeka who didn't get their way will be relentless in their pursuit to accumulate more power. But for now, our Kansas courts are guarded from government overreach and improper political influence. I encourage you to contact me with any questions or feedback on this issue.

Pancake Day

I will be in Topeka on Tuesday as the Legislature prepares to debate and vote on the budget. Unfortunately, this means I won't be home to celebrate Pancake Day. I'll look forward to hearing about the results of the race!

Legislative Coffee

I will be having my next Legislative Coffee Saturday, February 13th at 10 a.m. at Spencer Browne's Coffee House. Please come by and let me know your thoughts.

Quote of the Week: *"The independence of the courts from improper political influence is a sacred principle. It must always be guarded."* - **(President Ronald Reagan)**.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve. Please contact me anytime. My email is: Shannon.francis@house.ks.gov.



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