

SHANNON FRANCIS

Kansas House District 125



June 2, 2016 Newsletter

Highway 54

You can't talk about Highway 54 without Jack Taylor and Max Zimmerman being mentioned. These two men dedicated years of their lives procuring improvements for the highway. It was bittersweet this month to attend a farewell party for Jack as he and Georgette depart for Lawrence KS to be closer to kids and to hear of Max's passing. Both of these men had a "can do" attitude towards the growth of our community. Jack worked endlessly in business and retail recruitment as Chamber Executive. Max was always looking to get Liberal an edge, whether it was Dorothy's House or the Rock Island Depot restoration. Liberal is poorer without these champions who served Liberal with vision and boundless optimism.

Weigh Station

I got a call last week about a rumor that the Weigh station east of town on Highway 54 was going to be torn down and rebuilt west of town at a cost of \$1 million. **THIS IS FALSE.** The plans for the Highway 54 expansion call for the existing weigh station to remain in place as part of a wide median so it can service both lanes of traffic. This project is indefinitely delayed because of the state budget crisis.

Philosophy

Two years ago I promised to put Seward County First. As your representative I have worked tirelessly to protect Highway 54 funding and our schools. Education and infrastructure are essential to our ability to create good

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Useful Resources

[State of Kansas Website](#)

[The Kansas Legislature](#)

[Legislative Bill Reports](#)

[Listen Live to Proceedings](#)

[Find a State Agency](#)

[Kansas unclaimed Property](#)

[Current Road Conditions](#)

[National Do Not Call List](#)

[Kansas Charity Check](#)

Useful Phone Numbers

Medicaid Fraud
1-866-551-6328

Welfare Fraud Hotline
800-432-3913

Department On Aging
800-432-3535

jobs and economic growth in rural Kansas. It is also important to support our local governments so they have the tools for our community to be successful. Topeka should not be deciding what is best for you. Government closest to the people is best. Each of us can run for office and be a part of our city and county governments as well as our school districts. My Methodist Bishop, Scott Jones, has a breakfast each year for Methodist Legislators. He gave me one piece of advice "Don't forget the big thing is the big thing." To me, Seward County is the "Big Thing."

Delegate or Trustee

Political Scientists have two theories about representative democracies. Is your representative a delegate who should act only as a mouthpiece for the wishes of the people? Or as Edmund Burke believed, is the representative a trustee who should have sufficient autonomy to deliberate and act in favor of the greater common good because they have studied the issue and have the necessary knowledge and access to information to make the best decision? I believe the truth is in the middle. There are some issues where our community's values and beliefs are well known and it is my responsibility to represent those values. When the issue is more obscure like "weight limits for LNG fueled tractor trailers," the trustee model is more appropriate. I mention this to let you know how important your thoughts are on the issues facing Kansas. Topeka does not know what is best for you and I represent you.

Topeka

Yesterday State General Fund Receipts came in \$66.67 million short of estimates that had been lowered on April 20th. The shortage was primarily in individual and corporate income tax. After the horrendous budget cuts earlier this month we are now forecasted to end the year with a negative balance of around \$40 million. The rumor is the shortage will be made up by cutting Medicaid expenditures and higher education. Earlier this month our cut in Medicaid spending of \$39.9 million resulted in a loss of matching federal funds of \$49.8 million. Much of the Medicaid spending in Kansas goes to rural hospitals and nursing homes for seniors and disabled. I fear the effect this may have on our rural hospitals and nursing homes.

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

I'm not sure anyone in the Governor's office really knows what to do but to continue to cut spending.

School Finance

The Friday before Memorial Day the Kansas Supreme Court ruled the equity fix for Local Option Budgets was unconstitutional. Wednesday the Legislature reconvened for our closing session called Sine Die. This is usually a formality. House Leadership made an attempt to pass another solution for the court to review. Senate Leadership felt more time was needed to develop a solution so the legislature closed without addressing the issue. In fairness, it is probably not wise to ram a haphazard solution through both houses of the legislature in a 12-hour period. There is no way anyone could have really known the unintended consequences of the legislation. What is frustrating is many of us were sure the prior solution would be ruled unconstitutional so why didn't we have something ready to go? Too many people are playing politics on this issue. We need to fund our schools.

Here is where I think the rub is. The ruling from the court has to do with equalization of the local option budget (LOB). In a perfect world the LOB is only for extra stuff like robotics teams, swimming pools...quality of life things. In reality it is used for everyday operating expenses. The courts have ruled that education is the states obligation and every Kansas Taxpayer regardless of where he lives should pay the same for education as a taxpayer in a similar financial situation in another part of the state. This is a hard thing to do. Each school district can raise up to 30% -33% of their budget by using LOB. In 2014 the poorest school district had a valuation of \$21,854 per student. The richest school district had a valuation of \$547,862 per student. So, 1 mill for LOB in the poorest district would raise \$21.85 per student and \$547.86 per student for the richest school district. The net effect is if you live in the school district with Wolf Creek Nuclear Plant you have great schools and low property taxes. If you live in Liberal where one mill raises \$33.91 per student you have high property taxes for schools.

Too Much Information Where the legislature gets bogged down is this: If we equalize with the formula prior to the block grant, the Johnson County Schools lose around \$4.5 million and USD 480 gains around \$273,000 in state

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

equalization money. This is politically unpopular with representatives from rich school districts and costs \$40 million we don't have. To hold everyone **"harmless" (no one loses any money)** the state has to put in around \$50 million we don't have. So the legislature continues to pass bills that are unconstitutional because taxpayers from poor school districts are being taxed higher than those from wealthy school districts, we don't have the money to fix it and/or the political will to take millions of dollars of equalization money from "rich" school districts.

Constituent Services

Please reach out to me regarding issues with our state government that I can help with. I do ask that you send the request to me by email. My email address is: Shannon.francis@house.ks.gov. This insures that I get the information correctly to the agency we are working with.

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