

This Week **in Topeka**

Overland Park Chamber

*Business, Economic Development & Local Government News
from the Legislative Session Week of January 25-29, 2016*

Written by Tom Robinett, Vice President of Public Policy and Advocacy

I want to kick off this week's report with the good news. On Friday, it was announced that Ronnie Metzger will be the new Johnson County Election Commissioner. Congratulations, Ronnie!

The legislative committees continue to be hard at work receiving and digesting a lot of information and, I am sure, there is work and conversation going on behind the scenes. However, this session continues to be relatively slow with respect to bills actually worked by those committees and even slower insofar as debate on the House and Senate floors goes. Next week, though, it appears the pace will pick up, and we also will hit the first legislative deadline on Monday, the last day that individual members may request bills to be drafted.

Court Funding. Contrary to the otherwise slow movement of the session, on Thursday the Senate passed **HB2449** by a vote of 39-1 repealing the non-severability provision in the 2015 judicial budget bill.

Secretary of Commerce. Also last Tuesday, the Senate voted 40-0 to confirm the appointment of Andrew Soave as the new Secretary of Commerce.

Property Tax Lid. There continues to be a lot of talk (and, I believe, work) about the property tax lid passed by the 2015 legislature. There is little support for a complete repeal of the lid as proposed in **HB2493** and even less chance of it actually happening. Fortunately, there also is recognition that, as it is currently written, **SB316** goes too far. Last week's best guess continues to evolve, and now it seems most likely that the effective date of the new requirements will be moved up to July 1, 2017, not 2016, and most of the exceptions that were included in the original bill will be retained, although with some tweaking.

Alvarez & Marsal. On Thursday, A&M made presentations to the House Appropriations and Senate Ways & Means committees to review the “budget process recommendations” from its efficiency study commissioned by the 2015 legislature. The main focus of their report was fiscal stability, improved accountability, and budget transparency, and they offered 15 “smart practices” that would “result in improved financial and operating outcomes and, ultimately, better and more reliable long-term fiscal health.” Among those smart practices were recommendations to establish a rainy day fund, improve revenue forecasting, develop multi-year financial plans, adopt real policies for debt management and pension liabilities, implement performance budgeting and improve transparency about the role of transfers in the budget.

Shorter Legislative Sessions. The House Appropriations Committee heard testimony from one of its own members, Overland Park Rep. Marvin Kleeb, in support of **HB2513** which would limit the length of legislative sessions in odd numbered years to 60 days. Rep. Kleeb made the case that the 60-day limit would ease the financial and personal burdens of serving in what is supposed to be a part time legislature while improving efficiency and encourage self discipline and leadership. Sounds like a pretty good idea here!

K-12 Education. Next week the House Education Committee will be the center of testimony on three interesting bills. On Monday, it’s **HB2486**, which would create the school district bond project review board. That board, made up of four legislators and two members of the State Board of Education, would have to approve the extent to which a school facility to be constructed using general obligation bonds would be eligible for state aid.

On Tuesday, they will hear testimony on **HB2457** that expands the program that allows tax credits for funds provided by corporations that are used for scholarships for students to attend private schools. Included is the expansion of those who are eligible for the tax credits from only corporations to all taxpayers.

And then, on Wednesday, **HB2504** will be heard. This is the bill mentioned in my report last week that would realign the state’s school districts by requiring that all Kansas counties with fewer than 10,000 students be consolidated into a single, county-wide school district; in counties that have more than 10,000 students, districts would be consolidated or realigned so that all districts within the county have a minimum of 1,500 students. District boundary lines would be redrawn by the State Board of Education in 2017 and again every ten years thereafter.

Budget. Also on tap for next week – more hearings on the budget bills in both Appropriations and Ways & Means. Those begin as the most recent tax revenue collections

are set to be released on Monday, giving the legislature an updated picture of the state's financial condition.

Upcoming Events. The next **Public Policy and Advocacy Committee (formerly the Government Affairs Committee)** meeting is noon-1:30 p.m. on **Friday, February 12** at the Chamber office. Scheduled is a presentation on KanCare expansion by the Kansas Hospital Association. Please register by 5:00 p.m. on Tuesday, February 9 – [click here](#). Partners and sponsors may register with Julie Hakan at jhakan@opchamber.org.