



# KANSAS JOURNEYS

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## DESTINATION CAPITOL HILL

By Bridgette Jobe,  
Kansas City KS CVB

This past March I attended my first Destination Capitol Hill in Washington DC. This is the US Travel equivalent to the TIAK Day on the Hill. The purpose of this event is to bring the travel industry together to deliver a unified message to Capitol Hill, advocating for policies that increase travel to and within the U.S.



The Group enjoying drinks in DC.

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**KANSAS TOURISM CONFERENCE**  
**IGNITE KANSAS TOURISM**  
 OCTOBER 26-28, 2015  
 WICHITA, KANSAS

## KANSAS TOURISM CONFERENCE

The hotel block is open now:

Host Hotel:  
Hotel at Old Town  
830 E. First Street North  
Wichita, KS 67202  
844.897.3058

Additional:  
Courtyard by Marriott  
Wichita at Old Town  
820 E. Second St. North  
Wichita, KS 67202  
844.277.7959



*(Continued from page 1, Destination Capitol Hill)*

Since this was my first experience, I planned on doing a lot of watching and listening. There were several in the Kansas delegation who had attended before, and I wanted to learn from their experience. The first day was spent being educated by US Travel on the key messages that we would be discussing in our Congressional meetings, and coordinating our action plan. The second day was dedicated to appointments with our Members of Congress and their staff.

Here are a couple of my takeaways from this trip...

First ... Be prepared to walk. Wear comfortable shoes and do your best to keep up. Natalie walks fast!

Second ... this was a great opportunity to begin, or to build on, the relationships with my Congressional leaders and their staff. Face-to-face time really does make a difference.

An interesting item that came up while in DC was a bet between Congressmen Yoder and Pompeo, centered around the KU vs. Wichita State basketball game. The outcome of that bet was that the two of them will ride Verruckt at Schlitterbahn, the world's tallest waterslide, this summer.

After we returned home, each of the Kansas delegates sent a thank you note to our Congressman's office, thanking them for taking the time to meet with us. I wrote a note to the staff member from Congressman Yoder's office. Since then, we have exchanged emails with each other, some of it concerning the upcoming Verruckt adventure, but also about other topics. I have a new connection with my Congressman's office that would not have developed if I had not made the trip to DC.

I believe Destination Capitol Hill was well worth the time and expense for me to attend. I look forward to next year. ■



The DC attendees with Senator Jerry Moran (from left to right: Natalie Bright, Bridgette Jobe, Suzan Barnes, Senator Moran, Kevin Fern, Jan Stevens and Donna Price)

## WEBSITE RFPs SOLICITED

TIAK is seeking the services of a qualified contractor in order to redesign our website and possible vendors have been solicited. The updated TIAK.org website's targeted launch date is October 1, 2015 and will be introduced at the Kansas Tourism Conference later that month.

RFP proposals must be received no later than 5:00 PM on Monday, May 25, 2015. Please review the RFP link for specifications: [Website Redesign RFP](#), and the list of vendors solicited: [Website RFP Vendor List](#). Both items may be found on the current TIAK website at [www.tiak.org/website-redesign-rfp](http://www.tiak.org/website-redesign-rfp). ■





## 2015 VETO SESSION



The Kansas Legislature returns on Wednesday, April 29<sup>th</sup> for the 2015 Veto Session. Legislators have left a great amount of work to be completed. Legislators must pass both the 2016 and 2017 budgets as well as a tax increase to fill a budget hole close to \$400 million. As such, Kansas legislators and lobbyist are planning for a long and difficult veto session.

Most agree that much isn't left to cut from the budget, especially if legislative leadership sticks to their commitment of no further cuts to K-12 education, KPERS or social services. Chairman of House Appropriations, Ron Ryckman, Olathe-R, estimates there is likely \$10-15 million that can be found from savings realized from recent welfare reforms as well as possible cuts to higher education. However, most of the shortfall will need to be filled by tax increases. This will be the focus of much Veto Session discussion in order to wrap up the 2015 session. Thus far the tax proposals receiving the most discussion include:

- Sin Taxes (tax on tobacco or alcohol)
- Repeal "pass thru" income tax (\$100-\$160M)
- Raises sales tax 6.15% to 6.3% (\$80 M)
- Apply income tax on passive income (\$30 M)
- Raise tax on business income to nonresidents
- Raise tax on MCO's (tax on already struggling Kancare providers)(\$80 M to State General Fund)
- Reduce income tax deductions further
- Raise gasoline tax 5 cents (raises \$530M for transportation program and allows an equal amount general sales tax dedicated to the transportation fund to be transferred to the state general fund. However, this would put Kansas fuel tax 12 cents higher than Missouri).

It is uncertain which tax has the most support amongst legislators returning to complete the budget puzzle, however, it is likely part of the tax package that will include some sort of consumption tax so that revenue can be raised immediately. While there is a growing momentum amongst legislators to reverse or tweak certain provisions of the recent income tax reductions, such changes provide no relief for the 2016 budget which begins July 1, 2016. In addition, the Governor has stated he is not interested in repealing any provisions of the income tax plan.

Many have asked what is contributing to the significant shortfalls. A recent analysis showed the following as primary contributing factors:

- Severance tax down \$25M & expected to yield \$42M less than predicted
- Sales tax revenues \$30M less that predicted
- Corporate income tax receipts down \$30M less than predicted
- Income tax reductions equal \$18M less tax revenue per month than predicted

When legislators return on Wednesday April 29<sup>th</sup> leadership will begin to see what proposals garner the 63 and 21 votes needed to pass a budget and tax plan to pay for it. Currently, the House leadership has a solid 55 votes while Senate leadership has the 21 votes it needs to pass its proposals. It will be most interesting to watch what deals are struck and which legislators are willing to hold their nose to vote for a tax increase. ■

## KANSAS DEPT. OF LABOR LAUNCHES UPDATED WEBSITE ON NEW HIRE REPORTING

Federal and State law requires employers to report newly hired and re-hired employees in Kansas to the New Hire Directory within 20 days of the hire. The Kansas Department of Labor (KDOL) has launched a new website to provide employers with detailed information about reporting new hires, including how to report online and other reporting options.

The new website, at [http://www.dol.ks.gov/UI/newhires\\_BUS.aspx](http://www.dol.ks.gov/UI/newhires_BUS.aspx), includes information about the law and when and how to report every business' new employee in Kansas. The website provides the required information about who must report, how it should be reported and how to get additional assistance when reporting.



Under the law, new hire reporting speeds up the child support income withholding order process, expedites collection of child support from parents who change jobs frequently and helps locate non-custodial parents to help in establishing paternity and child support orders. New hire reporting helps children receive the support they deserve. Employers serve as key partners in ensuring financial stability for many children and families. Information collected through the new hire directory is provided to the Kansas Department of Children and Families Child Support Services.

New hire reporting also allows states to reduce unemployment benefit and worker's compensation overpayments and fraud. Information reported to KDOL is shared with other states through the federal New Hire Directory. ■

## KANSAS AT YOUR SERVICE (KAYS)

Introducing Kansas' online hospitality training: Kansas At Your Service (KAYS)! This statewide standardized customer service training, emphasizes the importance of quality customer service in the tourism and hospitality industry and equips employees of Kansas with tools and resources to better serve our visitors. Training for the web-based certification is offered at NO CHARGE and can be taken by anyone who wants to improve their customer service skills.

Tourism is one of the largest and most important industries in Kansas. Its impact is felt throughout Kansas: from small communities to large cities, from convention centers to bed and breakfasts, from the Eastern Wooded Hills to the Western High Plains, from just starting in the workforce to those that own and manage the many businesses that make up this vital industry.

Kansas' tourism industry is a major contributor to Kansas' great way of life. The continued success of the state's tourism industry directly depends on the first class service that will make the experience of our visitors to Kansas memorable.

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*(Continued from page 5, Kansas At Your Service)*

That's where you come in. By taking the time to learn Kansas At Your Service, it will not only help yourself and your employer, but it will provide the kind of service that will keep visitors coming back to Kansas visit after visit.

After completing the Kansas At Your Service program you will be able to print a personalized certificate that is recognized by employers throughout the state as a symbol of your expertise in service and knowledge of the key success factors in the tourism industry of Kansas.

Then you will also have the opportunity to become certified as a host with the destinations that have been associated with the Kansas At Your Service program. Once you have completed each course, you will again be able to print a certificate showing your employer that you are certified in that community or region. ■

## STATEWIDE TRANSIENT GUEST TAX (TGT) PROPOSED



**Legislative Proposal:** In an effort to collect revenue and fill the state budget whole, the Kansas Legislature is considering imposing a 4% statewide Transient Guest Tax to be assessed on hotels & lodging, state cabins and car rental with 3.5% of the fee collected being dedicated to the State General Fund (SGF) and .5% dedicated to the Kansas Promotion Fee Fund.

**TIAK Opposition:** The Travel Industry Association of Kansas (TIAK) opposes a statewide TGT as a means for filling the budget gap for the following reasons:

- A statewide TGT singles out one industry and unfairly taxes them to fill a budget gap while other industries are left untaxed. This is an unfair tax policy and will encourage the tourism industry to seek other states to expand their businesses and force travelers to visit other states with lower taxes.
- Implements a new tax on a thriving industry and will inadvertently slow its growth. At a time when the Governor has worked hard to pass tax cuts to grow the state's economy, we question if the Kansas Legislature wants to assess a new tax on one of the state's leading industries.
- TIAK advocates for tax measures which generate revenue through investment in projects or initiatives that produce jobs and/or encourage visitor spending. The proposed statewide TGT is designed to fill a budget hole and not to create jobs.
- Passage of a statewide TGT will put all Kansas communities at a competitive disadvantage. If passed, most Kansas communities will be forced to access the highest guest taxes in the nation. This will hurt Kansas' competitiveness in attracting sporting tournaments and conventions to Kansas. Meeting and event planners track all costs—including taxes and other government fees—when determining where they select to hold their events. If Kansas assesses a 4% TGT this will automatically raise the cost for all events to be hosted in Kansas.
- While the Kansas Legislature anticipates a statewide TGT will raise an estimated \$25 million in additional revenue, it has failed to recognize that a 4% cost increase will detour travel to Kansas. With fewer visitors, will come less overnight stays. Instead, we will see more visitors avoiding overnight stays in Kansas. Not only will less TGT be collected, but less sales tax will also be collected making the actual impact of the proposal far less meaningful in the effort to fill the budget gap.
- Unlike the state of Kansas, who currently administers the local TGT collections and keeps a 2% fee, Kansas hoteliers and car rental companies are given no compensation for their administration of the proposed statewide TGT. ■

## NEW OVERLAND PARK CVB PRESIDENT



The Overland Park Convention and Visitors Bureau (OPCVB) is pleased to announce the appointment of its new President, Dana Markel. Markel succeeds Dr. Jerry Cook, who retired at the end of 2014 after serving as the OPCVB's president for 19 years.

Most recently, Markel was the Executive Director of the Omaha Convention and Visitors Bureau and served in that position since 2005. As a member of the Omaha Mayor's Cabinet, she worked with key city leaders to develop and enhance Omaha as a tourism destination.

With more than 20 years of experience in the hospitality industry, Markel has worked in convention sales in Omaha, Oklahoma City, Dallas and Miami. In 2001, she joined Omaha's Metropolitan Entertainment and Convention Authority (MECA) as the convention center director of sales and marketing. She was also one of five individuals who spearheaded the business strategy of Omaha's convention center and arena. Markel also served on the Executive Committee of the Omaha Sports Commission, the Omaha Metropolitan Hospitality Association, the Omaha Downtown Improvement District and was appointed by former Nebraska Governor Dave Heineman as a State Tourism Commissioner.

This is a homecoming for Markel who is originally from the Kansas City metropolitan area. She assumed her role on March 30, 2015. ■

## VISIT TOPEKA APPOINTS NEW PRESIDENT & CEO

Visit Topeka Inc. is pleased to announce the hiring of Brett Oetting as the organization's new president and CEO.

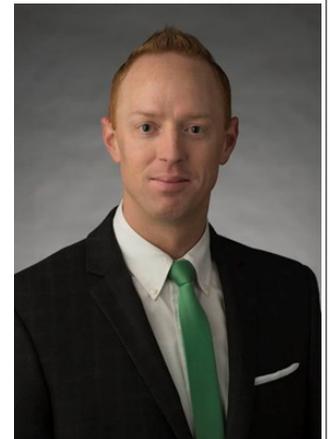
"As someone who is proud to call Topeka home, I am very excited for this opportunity," said Oetting. "Shawnee County is full of quality hotels, restaurants, events, and entertainment venues. I look forward to working with each of them to take advantage of the current positive momentum in the community."

Since 2011, Oetting has served as the senior vice president of operations and sales at Parrish Hotel Corporation, where he has worked for 10 years. During his time as the senior vice president of operations and sales, Oetting provided leadership, direction, management and support to general managers of franchised hotels and Parrish Hotel's corporate staff. In 2014, he played a part in a company-wide revenue increase of 9.56 percent, outpacing the city-wide 8.6 percent increase. He was also responsible for facilitating the development of a company-wide strategic plan, pursuing quality relationships with local and national industry leaders and implementing effective sales strategies to attract new business.

"Brett's proven leadership and extensive experience within the fields of tourism, hospitality and sales are qualities we wanted for the new president and CEO," said Mark Kossler, chairman of the Visit Topeka Inc. board. "The board is confident that his history of successful planning, marketing and management will greatly benefit this organization."

With more than 15 years of experience in the hospitality, tourism and guest services industry, Oetting has a history of effectively working with local lodging properties, attractions and sporting events to bring more visitors to Topeka. In addition to serving on the board of directors for Ramada Mid-America Marketing Association and Topeka Friends of the Zoo, Oetting has been involved in industry and local efforts during his career. In 2012, Oetting was chosen as one of Topeka's Top "20 Under 40" by the Jayhawk Area Council which recognizes residents for their professional and personal contributions to the Topeka and Shawnee County area and he was a member of the 2010 Leadership Greater Topeka class.

Oetting started his duties as president and CEO on April 7. He replaces past president and CEO Terry Cook, who resigned from the position in November. ■



## WHAT ARE YOU DOING FOR NATIONAL TOURISM WEEK?

### *The Kansas Bucket List*

Kansas Tourism is excited to announce their Spring campaign, The Kansas Bucket List—a multi-media campaign comprised of user-generated content. During the first part of the campaign, they will be collecting submissions to be included in the Kansas Bucket List. An independent panel will narrow the list down to 70 experiences which will be announced in the Winter 2015 issue of KANSAS! Magazine (which will be celebrating its 70th anniversary).

People will be able to submit their entries for the Bucket List via a form that will be included in the Summer issue of the magazine, via web form on TravelKS.com and via Social Media by using the hastag, #KSBucketList. A Kansas Bucket List webpage will showcase images using the hashtag and submitted via Instagram, Facebook and Twitter.



**#KSBucketList**

### *Save the Date*

The Kansas Bucket List campaign will kick off at a Media Event planned for the morning of Monday, May 4 in Overland Park. Time and location details to come. You are invited to showcase your destination to media and the public at the event. To reserve your space at the event, please fill out the web form. ■

## SUPPORT A STUDENT



The 2015 Kansas Tourism Conference will be here before you blink! Now is the time to contribute to the Student Scholarship Fund so we can continue offering a scholarship to a student in Kansas hospitality/tourism program of study. This is a great opportunity for the next generation of tourism professionals to learn about Kansas, network in the industry and build upon their coursework and learning. However, we cannot award a scholarship without the help of our members. Did you know it takes \$600 to bring a student to conference each year? Between meals, transportation, lodging and

conference registration, that's a lot for a college kid to shell out, so let's all help and keep the momentum going for this great program! You can donate as little as \$10. For more information, go to [www.tiak.org/2015-student-scholarship-fund/](http://www.tiak.org/2015-student-scholarship-fund/). We've currently collected nearly \$300—thank you to all who have already contributed! ■

### Calendar of Events

**June 1, 2015**  
Marketing Committee Meeting

**June 15, 2015**  
Advocacy Committee Meeting

**NATIONAL TRAVEL & TOURISM WEEK** MAY 2-10, 2015



Travel Industry Association of Kansas  
825 S Kansas, Suite 502  
Topeka, KS 66612  
Phone: 785/233-9465  
Website: [www.tiak.org](http://www.tiak.org)