



TIAK TIMES

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TIAK TAKES THE HILL

By Suzan Barnes, TIAK President



Every March, we get the wonderful opportunity to travel to Washington, D.C., to visit our Kansas state legislators. Eight of us (and families) took The Hill by storm. [Linda Craghead](#), [Natalie Bright](#), [Susie Santo](#), [Bridgette Jobe](#), [Donna Price](#), [Roxanne Morgan](#) and I had a great time. We were able to visit all of our congresspersons. As always, we attended a session the day before our appointments, where U.S. Travel Association made sure we were informed about all of our talking points. The session was very informative—with a fair amount of humor. This election year has given the pundits in Washington, D.C. lots to be humorous about.

Our talking points and priority issues have not changed much in the past few years. We are always concerned about how the nation’s transportation network, both to, and within the United States affects Kansas. Our talking points:

FAST ACT—Fixing America’s Surface Transportation The FAST Act supports the role of the travel industry in the United States surface infrastructure and transportation.

VISA WAIVER PROGRAM This allows pre-screened, pre-approved travelers from participating (38 to date) to travel to the United States without obtaining a visa for business or leisure travel up to 90 days. There is an expansion of additional countries pending.

PFC—Passenger Facility Charge We advocated for raising the PFC from a maximum of \$4.50 to a maximum of UP TO \$8.50 per person usage fee for airport maintenance.

WHEN IN CRISIS, REMEMBER TRAVEL There are times when Congress must respond quickly to crises, such as terrorist attacks and disease outbreaks. However, we urged them to remember that when travel suffers, so does the American economy.

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TIAK TAKES THE HILL (CONT.)

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TRAVEL AND TOURISM CAUCUSES The House and the Senate both have tourism caucuses established as a bipartisan approach to deliver the benefits of travel to their states and districts.

Our coalition was well received by all of our legislators. Overall, it was a wonderful trip. I would encourage all TIAK members to attend the Destination Capitol Hill event hosted by U.S. Travel Association. Mark your calendars now for next year—March 28-29, 2017!

Being a member of TIAK is an honor, a privilege and an industry necessity. I can't imagine not having an affiliation with this wonderful association. What a great industry we have. What a great state we have. The ability to learn from and communicate with such wonderful people is very rewarding. A staple of our business should be cross-marketing with everyone in the tourism and hospitality industries. TIAK is one-stop shopping for experience, expertise and professional networking.

As we approach April, I hope everyone had a wonderful Easter holiday. Please plan to join us in Hays for our April 14th board meeting. I look forward to seeing you there! ■



of what the museum will showcase. A big thank you to the event's sponsor, Visit Topeka, and to the TI-AK board members who attended—[Roger Hrabe](#) and [Shelia Lampe](#).

If your community is interested in hosting a Kansas Tourism Caucus in the upcoming months, please send an email to Natalie at: Natalie@BrightCarpenter.com. ■

KANSAS TOURISM CAUCUS

On March 14th, nearly 20 members of the Kansas Legislature attended our second Kansas Tourism Caucus lunch event hosted by Visit Topeka, TIAK and KDWPT. The event was held at the Historic Topeka Harley-Davidson and focused on the Evel Knievel Museum, which is scheduled to open this fall. Owner Mike Patterson, in addition to a fantastic BBQ lunch, briefed Caucus members on their efforts to bring the museum to Topeka, giving them a behind-the-scenes tour



taste OF



Travel Industry
Association of Kansas

Travel Industry Association of Kansas (TIAK)

**Not sure if you should bite off more than you can chew?
Well, how about a little “taste” then?**

**Any new member can join TIAK in 2016 for just \$50!
This special “Taste of TIAK” is good for new members only,
and is being offered through the end of the year.**



Become a member today at
<https://tiak.org/tiak-membership/join-tiak/>
and start enjoying the benefits of
membership that only TIAK can offer!

“This membership program got me in the door. Once I was involved and attending the tourism conference, I saw the value of the networking opportunities and educational components. Our TIAK membership became a priority to my organization.”

—Board Member Roger Hrabe, Rooks County Economic Development Director

“TIAK has been a valuable partner with Kansas Travel & Tourism in gaining exposure for our industry. Through increased membership, our unified voice grows even stronger in leading the charge for the 3rd largest industry in the state: a relationship benefiting every Kansas community, large and small.”

—Linda Craghead,
Kansas Department of Wildlife,
Parks and Tourism Assistant Secretary



LEGISLATIVE UPDATE



After seventy-four days of session, the 2016 Kansas Legislature reached first adjournment on Thursday, March 24th. By moving up session deadlines, legislators ended regular session a week early and have banked additional time they can use to sort out budget shortfalls and other undecided issues when they return to Topeka on April 27th for Veto Session. Below are a few highlights of what has been accomplished thus far and what issues remain to be handled during Veto.

School Finance

Perhaps the most critical legislation passed thus far took less than 48 hours to be introduced, heard and debated by both chambers in an attempt to address equity in K-12 school funding. Senate Substitute for House Bill 2655 passed the last day on final action with 93 votes in the House and 32 votes in the Senate.

The bill only spends \$2 million in additional money on schools, but mostly shifts distribution and equalizes the capital outlay and local option budget formulas. Proponents of the measure boast that the plan creates a similar property taxing effort across the state, narrowing the gap between the wealthiest and poorest districts through their local option budget. The bill also includes a hold harmless provision that ensures no district loses funding for school year 2016-2017, giving the Kansas Department of Education and the Legislature time to craft a new school finance formula moving forward.

The rushed process was in response to the Kansas Supreme Court's ruling last month that the funding passed last year in the block grant bill was constitutionally unequal. In the court's opinion was a deadline to address the issue by July 1, 2016 or risk schools potentially closing. The Legislature's hired attorney and transcriptionist were in the Statehouse all week conducting official proceedings and creating a record as evidence for the court.

Though the bill passed the Legislature, and in record time, all legislators are not supportive. On Monday, House and Senate Democrats filed a petition challenging the constitutionality of the bill and calling it an ill attempt to fixing school finance. Democrats called upon the Legislature to invest an additional \$50 million into schools to truly fix the equity issues. If the bill does not pass muster with the Court lawmakers will be back at the drawing board during the Veto session.

Juvenile Justice Reform

The Legislature also passed the most comprehensive reform to the Kansas juvenile justice system in decades. Senate Bill 367 passed with overwhelming bipartisan support and aims to decrease detention, incarceration and out-of-home placements of young offenders and rather invests in community-based educational, vocational and therapeutic programs. The plan is estimated to save the state \$72 million over five years, with a lockbox provision that ensures those savings are reinvested back into the local programs. Other key components of the bill include new time limits on sentences, probations and case length for juvenile offenders; graduated responses for youth offenders who violate technical conditions of probation; written plans for offenders' re-entry to the community after incarceration; and the creation of a 19-member juvenile justice oversight committee.

VETO SESSION ISSUES

Property Tax Lid Compromise Negotiations Continue

The Senate passed Senate Substitute for HB 2088 by a vote 24-16 after five hours of debate on the floor. The

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LEGISLATIVE UPDATE (CONT.)

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bill modifies portions of a property tax reform package that was passed last year, including moving up the public vote requirement to January 1, 2017 before property taxes can be raised higher than the rate of inflation. It also gives local governments more flexibility on timing, allowing the vote to be held as either part of primary and general elections, special elections, or mail ballots.

Cities and counties have been negotiating a compromise all week with the Kansas Association of Realtors and Chamber of Commerce regarding a number of exemptions in the bill. However, talks were stalled in the tax conference committee late yesterday afternoon from confusion over one last issue—an exemption for the loss of assessed valuation due to legislative action, judicial action or a ruling by the board of tax appeals. The plan is to hammer out the final agreement during the Veto session.

STAR Bonds for American Royal Still at Play

On Wednesday, the House voted 97-24 to sustain Governor Brownback's line item veto of the Sales Tax as Revenue (STAR) bonds provision in this year's budget bill that prohibited any new STAR bond projects in Wyandotte County. The Senate last week voted 30-8 in favor of the override. Because the action requires a two-thirds majority in both the House and Senate, the Governor may continue to pursue moving the American Royal livestock show to Kansas from Missouri.

The House Tax Committee held a hearing on House Bill 2738, which reforms the STAR bond program in Kansas and adds new requirements and procedures on issuance of bonds, including 50% requirement from private investment.

Senate Bill 474, the Senate's passed version for STAR bond reform, restricts the transfer of STAR bonds from one district to another. There was testimony in committee hearings stating that the transfer of bonds from the Village West district in Wyandotte County to the American Royal complex is essential to its viability. Critics say that that the \$42 million in sales tax revenue from Village West is ready to come back on the tax rolls and vital to the state's economic condition. Both bills are in front of the House Tax Committee and will be vetted during the Veto session.

Rainy Day Fund

During the final days of session, the Senate did advance SB 509, by a vote of 37-3, which establishes a Budget Stabilization Fund within the State Treasury as of July 1, 2017. The bill prohibits expending moneys from the Fund without an act of the Legislature or the State Finance Council. The Budget Stabilization Fund retains all interest earned from funds deposited within it. All moneys contained within the fund are included as part of the State General Fund ending balance for purposes of the Governor's Budget Report to the Legislature. However, the bill prohibits the Secretary of Administration from considering the balance in the Budget Stabilization Fund for the purpose of determining whether an allotment is warranted. Supporters of the bill state a risk-based reserve fund policy will protect the Kansas state budget from unexpected shortfalls. 46 other states have some form of a reserve fund and creating such a fund was recommended in the efficiency study. In addition, the House passed HB 2734, which also proposes to create a Rainy Day Fund. We anticipate the issue being further discussed during the Veto Session.

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LEGISLATIVE UPDATE (CONT.)

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Tourism and Transportation Funding

SB 463, which proposes to eliminate and divert to the state general fund several dedicated funding sources for key programs such as transportation, tourism and children's programs, remains on the table for possible discussion during Veto Session as lawmakers work to shore up the budget holes. TIAK testified against SB 463 as it proposes to eliminate \$1.8 million in dedicated EDIF funding to the Division of Tourism, which is about half of their budget. In addition, the bill would eliminate dedicated sales tax funding of the transportation program. Advocates for both programs are concerned about the long-term stability of funding that is reliant on an unstable state general fund. As two very "proven" and important economic development programs for the state of Kansas, lawmakers need encouragement to not support bills of this nature. When the Legislature adjourned, funding for the KDWPT remained intact without any proposed tax cuts. However, there are still concerns what budget changes will occur during the Veto Session.

Revenue and Budget

Revenue estimates will be updated after the April consensus estimates are reported. Many expect the decline in revenues to continue, which will compound the budget issues. The question remains if the Legislature has left enough latitude for the governor to make adjustments to avoid calling a special session. While there will be additional budget adjustments made during the veto session most legislators are anxious to have a quick veto session so they can return home and begin campaigning for fall elections. There may also be additional discussions around bills that would make changes to economic development programs and incentives, such as STAR bonds, HPIP and PEAK. Some measures propose to establish an economic development "user fee" structure to fund the Kansas Department of Commerce. These proposals, coupled with revenue uncertainties, assure there will be much debate during the 2016 Veto Session. ■

CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHT TO HUNT, FISH & TRAP

From Senate Majority Leader Terry Bruce

The Federal and State Affairs Committee held a hearing on adding an amendment to the state's constitution. HCR 5008 would add the right to hunt, fish, and trap to the Kansas constitution. In order to amend the state constitution, a measure must receive a 2/3rds majority in both chambers of the legislature and be submitted to Kansas voters for approval. Voters would add the following language to the constitution:

"The people have the right to hunt, fish, and trap, including by the use of traditional methods, subject to laws and regulations that promote wildlife conservation and management and that preserve the future of hunting and fishing. Public hunting and fishing shall be a preferred means of managing and controlling wildlife. This section shall not be construed to modify any provision of law relating to trespass, property rights or water resources."

The vote would take place during the November 2016 General election and would add a constitutional safeguard to protect wildlife and promote conservation. Kansas has a rich sporting tradition that has spanned generations. This language will help preserve this heritage for future Kansans and allow the state to continue its conservation efforts. Currently 19 states have passed a constitutional amendment to protect the right to hunt and fish. HCR 5008 passed out of committee and awaits floor action. The Kansas House has already approved the proposal. If the Senate reaches the 2/3rds majority without making any amendments, the measure will be sent to the Kansas Secretary of State's office to make arrangements for the public vote. ■

LEADERSHIP KANSAS 2016 SELECTION



Congratulations to [Holly Lofton](#), Director of the Lindsborg Convention and Visitors Bureau, for being selected for the 2016 Leadership Kansas class. Leadership Kansas is a nationally recognized program that aims to develop and motivate current Kansas leaders and counts among its 1,400 alumni, some of the most distinguished leaders across the state.

An affiliated program of the Kansas Chamber, Leadership Kansas is one of the oldest and most prestigious statewide leadership programs in the country. Leadership Kansas is entering its 38th year of educating and motivating outstanding individuals from all four corners of the state. The program remains committed to its original mission to inspire leaders to maintain involvement in the social, business and political fabric of Kansas communities.

Each year, close to 700 people are nominated to apply for the program. After a thorough and thoughtful application and selection process, 40 individuals were selected from 137 applicants to participate in the 2016 Program. Leadership Kansas makes every effort to ensure geographic, ethnic, occupational, and gender diversity, from the applications received. The class of 2016 was approved by the Leadership Kansas Board of Trustees, chaired by Jenifer Sanderson (Class of '09). John Federico (Class of '97) serves as the Executive Director of the Leadership Kansas Program.

Throughout the six-month program, the 40 members of the class are exposed to a variety of experts and educational 3-day training sessions in different communities across the state. The diverse discussion topics include: business; education; agriculture; public policy; societal health; economic development; and government, just to name a few.

“Graduates of the Leadership Kansas program leave with a better understanding of our state and are better equipped to shoulder important leadership responsibilities in their communities and careers,” Jenifer Sanderson states.

The 2016 Program begins in late April with an orientation session Lawrence and ends with graduation after the completion of the Topeka Session in October. The host cities for this year’s program are Dodge City/Garden City, Kansas city Metro, Hays, Pittsburg, Hutchinson/Wichita/El Dorado, and Manhattan/Topeka.

Distinguished Leadership Kansas alumni include: Former Speaker of the House and current Kansas Chamber President and CEO Mike O’Neal; Former Governor Bill Graves; Westar Energy CEO, Mark Ruelle; Andy Tompkins, President & CEO of the Kansas Board of Regents, C.Q. Chandler IV, President of INTRUST Bank; and former Insurance Commissioner Sandy Praeger, among others. [Click here](#) to see a complete list of the 2016 Leadership Kansas class. ■

WHITE PAPERS



There’s a new addition to the Resources Section of the TIAK website: White Papers.

Our Education Committee has researched and collected white papers on various topics. Current White Paper listings include:

- The State of the American Traveler
- EppersonDest Product Development: A Review and Analysis of the Role of CVBs in Destination Product Development
- Destination Brand Building
- Five Destination Branding Principles to Boost Economic Recovery
- Toll Advocacy: It’s Not Just For a Crisis
- Amadeus: Shaping the Future of Travel—Macro trends driving industry growth over the next decade

All of these white papers can be found on the TIAK website at: www.tiak.org/resources/white-papers-reports. Be sure to check them out!

NEW DIRECTOR AT EXPLORE LAWRENCE



explore
LAWRENCE

explorelawrence.com

eExplore Lawrence announced that Michael Davidson will be its new Executive Director. Davidson, of Oceanside, New York, has served as executive director of Greater Newark (New Jersey) Convention & Visitors Bureau and president of Tourism Walla Walla, Washington, as well as holding leadership positions with Glen Cove (New York) Chamber of Commerce and Long Island (New York) Convention & Visitors Bureau.

"I am honored by the opportunity to serve as Executive Director for eExplore Lawrence," Davidson said. "I look forward to working with the board of directors, staff and the community to grow tourism in Lawrence. This is an exciting time for the tourism industry and we intend to use best practices in destination marketing and management to develop short and long term goals to assure that the local tourism industry reaches its full potential."

"This past year has been a period of realignment and reorganization for eExplore Lawrence," said Megan Gilliland, City of Lawrence communications manager and interim director of eExplore Lawrence. "We've worked diligently over the past year to lay the foundation for the convention and visitors bureau to be successful in the future as it pursues new business and tourism opportunities."

Davidson will begin his new position at eExplore Lawrence on April 1, working with the board of directors and staff of eExplore Lawrence. ■

FRANKLIN COUNTY SEEKS DIRECTOR

Franklin County Convention and Visitors Bureau is seeking an Executive Director to direct and lead the CVB toward its mission. The Executive Director would be responsible for yearly budgetary planning in the range of approximately \$150,000 and work with the Board of Directors on policy-making and strategy for the organization.

A bachelor's degree in Business, Marketing, Tourism or a related field is preferred, plus three years' experience in management, marketing and event coordination. Franklin County residency is required within 90 days of employment and the candidate must be willing to work evenings and weekend hours as necessary to carry out the organization's activities.

Experience in the tourism industry with a CVB or Chamber of Commerce, hotel or other tourism entity is preferred.

For more information, please visit the TIAK job opportunities page at <https://tiak.org/resources/jobs-and-internships/>. The position will remain open until filled. Please send your cover letter and resumé to the Franklin County Convention and Visitors Bureau, PO Box 203, Ottawa, KS 66067; Attn: Juanita Peckham or email Juanita.Peckham@proforma.com. ■

CALENDAR OF EVENTS (CLICK ON EACH LINK FOR MORE INFORMATION):

April 14, 2016

TIAK Board Meeting

April 27, 2016

Veto Session begins

May 6, 2016

Social Media webinar

May 12, 2016

TIAK Executive Cmte Mtng

June 9, 2016

Economic Dev. Seminar
Pittsburg, Kan.

August 5, 2016

Facility Marketing Seminar
Garden City, Kan.

September 2, 2016

Agritourism webinar

October 17-19, 2016

Kansas Tourism Conference
Olathe, Kan.

November 4, 2016

Engaging Your Community
webinar

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