

SENATE PRESIDENT'S OFFICE

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STATE OF KANSAS

Committee Assignments:

Chairman:
Interstate Cooperation
Legislative Coordinating Council
Organization, Calendar and Rules
KPERs Select
NCSL President-Elect

Member:
Agriculture
Capitol Restoration Commission
Federal and State Affairs
Natural Resources
Pensions, Investments and Benefits
State Finance Council
CSG Executive Committee
The Energy Council Executive Committee

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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Senate Republican Leaders

Offer Positive View of Challenging 2011 Legislative Session

Budget, Engineering, KPERs, Workers Comp, Unemployment Insurance, DUI Bill, Health measures held up as major accomplishments

Topeka – Republican Leaders in the Kansas Senate, following a long day and a very late night on the Senate floor, today released a statement regarding the conclusion of the 2011 Legislative Session and those measures they considered among the most important accomplishments.

Senate President Steve Morris, R-Hugoton, acknowledged senators' hard work on regular standing committees, special committees and conference committees. "We came into this session facing a budget shortfall of more than half a billion dollars," said Morris. "A balanced budget was passed thanks in large part to our Ways and Means Committee and three conferees who saw it through the arduous bargaining process. The KPERs Select Committee led us to take major steps to address the unfunded liability that has plagued our state employee retirement system. Also, building on discussions that began three years ago, an unprecedented plan was crafted and launched to meet the great need by our increasingly technical industry and manufacturing sectors for more engineers."

Morris continued, "Significant legislation was passed regarding Workers Comp and Unemployment Insurance. When faced by harsh fiscal conditions, the work of the DUI Commission went back to the drawing board where it was painstakingly scaled back to become a package that can make a big difference in the way the legal system deals with impaired drivers without the weight of a massive fiscal note. A number of excellent health measures were advanced including a bill on the licensing of EMTs that was vital to rural Kansas where doctors and hospitals are often few and far between."

Morris commended Senator Jay Emler, R-Lindsborg, whom he characterized as a great majority leader who kept things well scheduled and moving forward up to the very end. “Our Majority Leader did an exceptional job of managing the calendar, skillfully moving legislation and keeping the caucus apprised of issues. Under his leadership, until the very last day when much of the action was in the House and out of his control, we avoided late nights and long idle stretches on the floor.”

“We had some difficult decisions to make this year,” said Senate Majority Leader Jay Emler, R-Lindsborg. “But, we stepped up to the plate and found responsible ways to balance the budget and keep our economy on track for better days.”

Senate Vice President John Vratil, R-Leawood, added, “The budget we passed last night reflects our difficult economic times. As the economy rebound over the next few years, I hope we can restore many of the cuts we were forced to make.”

“Hard decisions had to be made in a tough economy,” concluded Senate Ways and Means Chair Senator Carolyn McGinn, R-Sedgwick. “Given the situation, we worked hard to protect many of the priorities important to Kansans limiting cuts to our most vulnerable citizens, local safety net clinics and education.”

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