



**Saint
Francis**
Community Services
Serving Children and Families Since 1945

Legislative Update

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The Advocates Tip Corner~

What is the Omnibus Session? The legislative research department has produced a book on legislative procedure in Kansas. You can search the document by doing a key word search. In particular you can find specific information about the state appropriations process including the omnibus session.

<http://www.kslegislature.org/legsrv-portal/index.do>

All current calendars, journals, status, and agendas of both the Senate and the House are readily available online at:

To be reviewed at omnibus...

As the House debated the SRS bill on the floor on Wednesday and the Senate Ways and Means Committee received the report from the SRS subcommittee the phrase "to be reviewed at omnibus" was common. Shored by a sense of "needing to know more information"...particularly about revenues...both houses are putting off major funding decisions until the legislature comes back at the end of April. While most of the key funding for human services and health reform will have to wait until then there have been some notable additions now. Particularly restoration of funding for the mental health system in the amount of \$15.8 million. This amount adds in \$7 M that the Governor did not recommend and dollars to bring the CMHC's to the same funding level prior to the end of a "certified match" process.

A quick budget primer...

This week both houses will be finishing up their respective budget bills and readying themselves for conference committee sessions on what is called the **final appropriations bill** fondly referred to in legislative circles as ...the mega bill. After full legislative action on the budget bills, they are merged into a single bill for final legislative approval. As a result of a conference committee between the Senate and the House they will reconcile the differences between the two houses "except" those issues requiring further appropriations work. That is what is done during the **omnibus session** approximately 2 weeks after the end of the regular session. (See advocates tip corner) During the break the Director of the Budget and the Director of Legislative Research prepare a "consensus estimate report" giving legislators guidance on what revenues are likely to be available when they address the unfinished budget items in the omnibus session.

For the upcoming week...

At this stage most committees are reviewing bills previously heard or will begin to meet in conference committee to reconcile differences in bills passed by both Houses. **HB 2570** regarding adoption assessments, and now **HB 2641** (formerly SB 592 regarding tax exemptions for SFCS, Kansas CASA and others) will be headed to conference committee. **SB 453** establishing a rural commission, is still in committee but likely to move out this week.

Click here to see a copy of our 2008 agenda: **servicing a rural population, mental health and behavioral services and managing**

SRS Budget

Highlights of recommendations of the Senate Budget Committee that are now on their way to the full Senate are listed below:

- \$15.8 million added to CMHC's to restore funding to the 2008 level
- \$7 million in addition to the Governor's recommendation of \$10,000,000 that was recommended for the CMHC's in FY 2009
- \$8.8 million also for CMHC's to allow them to continue to provide the same level of services
- \$550,000 was added for the BAR's program from the Children's Initiative fund
- \$162,000 was added to increase protected income levels for individuals in the home and community based services waiver.

Important to note is that the Senate also did not include the \$9 million dollar shortfall in SRS needing restoration to support the child protective service system. [See testimony at www.st-francis.org](http://www.st-francis.org)

Bill and Committee Highlights

Building resources for the child welfare system with an emphasis on human resources

HB 2641 Passes the Floor of the Senate – Tax Exempt Status for Certain Non-Profit Organizations

The Senate Taxation Committee this week amended SB 592 as reported in previous updates into a bill that had already passed the House. After serious floor debate with some Senators protesting the random granting of tax exemptions, this bill passed on final action by a vote of 37-2. As a result of the Senate's move this bill now goes directly to conference committee between the Senate and the House. Still looming in the background as reported in last week's update is HB 2938 passed by the House that sets specific criteria for granting tax exempt status for non-profits. That is likely to influence the discussion in this conference committee. The conference committee has not been scheduled.

HB 2570 AN ACT concerning individuals authorized to conduct adoption assessments

Rejecting an attempt to amend the bill by the opponents, the Senate Health and Human Services Committee passed this bill out unanimously and it now heads to the Senate floor. If no amendments occur on the Senate floor the bill will be on its way to the Governor for signature. Again, the work on this bill was a collaborative approach with several child welfare organizations and professional associations.

Advancing a rural perspective in public policy and child welfare

Substitute SB 453 AN ACT concerning rural development; establishing the Kansas commission on rural policy; establishing the division of rural development within the department of commerce.

Still being worked in the House committee this bill is scheduled for committee discussion and possible passage on Monday. The Farm bureau has crafted amendments to respond to committee concerns and is including the language we developed for considering committee composition. **That committee is scheduled for 1:30 March 24th at 1:30 p.m.**

Advancing and supporting public policy that has a positive impact on children and families

A bill to watch~ Earlier this session HB 2696 was introduced to address the expansion of reimbursement for certain human service professionals. That bill did not make the turn around but the substance of it has been incorporated into

another House bill that addresses the key issues of 2696. **HB 2601** now sits on General Orders in the House waiting to be debated.

According to the bill brief developed by Legislative Services:

Sub. for HB 2601 would require that whenever a health insurance policy or contract provides reimbursement for any mental health service within the lawful scope of three professions regulated by the Behavioral Sciences Regulatory Board (Licensed Clinical Marriage and Family Therapists; Licensed Clinical Professional Counselors; and Licensed Clinical Psychotherapists) for services rendered, the insured individual is entitled to reimbursement regardless of whether the service was provided by a licensed physician or any of the professions identified in the bill.

SFCS has added this bill to our bill tracker. For the full background on this bill [click here](#).

In addition to the previous bills we will continue to monitor and work on the following bills as needed during the remainder of the session. For a complete copy of all bills and our most recent bill tracker each week [click here](#).

On the Schedule This Week

Since most committees we are watching are on call and have not listed agendas a complete schedule is not listed this week. [Click here](#) to go to the legislative website where you can find the full legislative schedule of **all** legislative activity.

Resource Library~

Just call 2-1-1 – United Way provides referral service

Representatives from United Way of the Plains reported to the Senate Ways and Means this week about a valuable referral service. **United Way 211**. This is provided as a community service and can connect people to a variety of supports and services including those agencies that are not United Way Agencies. Legislators praised this service as assisting in taking the burden particularly off the 911 systems in Kansas. To check it out click on the above link and bookmark it for future reference.

Contact information for SRS - SRS has recently updated the contact list for Children and Family Services. In addition to adding a Deputy Secretary of Children and Family Services, several other positions have changed. You can obtain this list by [clicking here](#).

Questions? Please contact Melissa Ness, Advocacy Coordinator at mlness@connections-unlimited.net