



The Legislature has passed the halfway point of the 2011 session, known as turnaround. By the time we adjourned on Friday, February 25th, the House had debated and voted on approximately 65 pieces of legislation that week alone.

For the next weeks of the session, the House will primarily focus on legislation that passed the Senate and has been sent to the House. Work will also continue in the House Appropriations Committee to address the approximate \$500 million budget hole for the 2012 fiscal year beginning July 1. The Governor has ended the stalemate between the House and Senate Rescission Bills and made allotments to cut \$50 million from the 2011 budget. This balancing of the current budget is required by statute; one of the significant effects locally is the approximately \$2.5 million cut from our school budget. Expect more cuts to Education in the 2012 Budget from the Republican conservative majority in the House.

### **A Brief Overview of the Process**

Prior to the start of the session, the Republican Caucus meets to vote on leadership positions. Our elected Speaker, the most powerful position in the House of Representatives, is Mike O'Neal, from Hutchinson, Kansas. This is Mike's second term as Speaker. One of his jobs is to make committee assignments for each Republican Representative. These assignments can be quite political in nature, and if a Representative does not vote "with" the Speaker, he or she might have a "change" in committee assignments the next term. The Speaker also chooses the Chair and Vice-Chair of each committee, and these coveted spots often are assigned according to loyalty shown to the Speaker when voting.

Bills come to the House by permission of the Speaker and then are assigned to a committee, again at the discretion of the Speaker. For instance, even though abortion bills are directly involved with Health, they have been traditionally assigned to the Federal and State Affairs committee. Once in a committee, the chairman decides if the bill will be "heard" (have testimony) or not. Once a bill is heard, the chairman then decides if the bill will be "worked" by the committee. You can see the intense politics of getting a bill through a committee.

If a bill does make its way through a committee and is passed out of committee, it goes back to the Speaker who can decide if the bill will be heard by the House or not. At all these decision-points it is possible, albeit difficult, to override a committee chair or the Speaker; however, that is not a popular political maneuver.

**Final Action** – A day after a bill passes the Committee of the Whole (which allows amendments by the full House) the House Rules require the bill to lay over for a day before the Final Action vote that will pass the legislation to the Senate. Final Action votes are normally taken at the beginning of the daily session. During Final Action, members must be in their seats and staff, guests and visitors are not allowed on the floor at that time

**Emergency Final Action (EFA)** – Most often seen on Fridays, Emergency Final Action allows legislators to leave for home rather than having to vote on a Saturday. If a majority of the House votes to suspend the rules that require bills to lay over a day between being worked in the Committee of the Whole and a Final Action vote, bills can go to Final Action on that same day.

**Call of the House** – If a legislator is not present for a Final Action vote, members can request a call of the House to hold the vote until the absent legislator arrives to cast his or her vote. If ten members raise their hands during Final Action, a call of the House is in order. During a call of the House, the doors are shut and members cannot leave unless excused by the Speaker. A close vote on a contentious issue can cause a call of the House that lasts hours.

**Exempt Committees** – Bills introduced into these committees are exempt from session deadlines; they have been “blessed.” There are three exempt House committees: Appropriations, Taxation, and Federal and State Affairs. A bill may have nothing or everything to do with one of these three committees, but if the Speaker wants a bill that seemed to have died in a committee due to its chairman, the bill can be “transferred” into an exempt committee. OR, a new bill can be introduced and move through an exempt committee, as long as the committee chair allows it.

**General Orders** – Between 4:00 and 5:00 each afternoon the House receives “the plan” for the next day’s session on the House floor, including what bills will be “above the line” (up for debate on the floor). That leaves very little time to evaluate and research bills, especially if there are ten or more to be debated. I read the bills as soon as General Orders arrive and seek input as needed from fellow legislators or constituents that have knowledge in that particular area. Sometimes I have received numerous e-mails or calls about a particular bill so I know what those constituents think about the bill. One of the challenges of the system is that each bill can be amended on the floor, so even if you are in favor of the original bill, the amendment might change things enough to necessitate a “no” vote. This session, because of the looming \$500 million deficit, I have voted “no” on many bills because of their cost. I also have followed Governor Brownback’s declaration that Kansans would see less government and have voted “no” to increased bureaucracy or government insertion into areas of privacy.

### **Need your help!**

As we look at the looming financial challenges ahead of us, I would like to have your help reducing costs. Sending a newsletter by snail-mail is quite expensive, while sending it by e-mail costs nothing. If it is at all possible for you to receive this newsletter solely by e-mail, I can

significantly reduce expenses. For those of you who need a paper newsletter, that is fine. No matter the route used, I want you to receive my newsletter!

When I took office last year, Senator Huntington was generous enough to share her e-mail list with me. The problem is that I have only the e-mail addresses, not the names of the constituents that go with the e-mail address. If you would take a moment to send an e-mail or note back to me with your name and address, along with the way you would prefer to receive the newsletter, I would greatly appreciate it!

For anyone that would like to meet with me to discuss any current legislation, we will be out of session for most of April. Feel free to visit with me by telephone or schedule a personal meeting. I am here to serve as the voice of District 25 and appreciate receiving input from you. I encourage you to take advantage of my website, [www.barbarabollier.org](http://www.barbarabollier.org), to read updates from me or to utilize the many links provided that can provide you with current information about legislation, schools, etc.

Thank you for the honor of serving you.

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