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KATHLEEN SEBELIUS, GOVERNOR

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Nicole Corcoran, Press Secretary
785.368.8500

Kansas moves forward despite legislative inaction *Health care identified as the session's missed opportunity*

As the 2008 Legislative Session concludes, Governor Kathleen Sebelius discussed the proposals she made during her 2008 State of the State Address in the areas of quality education, the innovation economy, centers for rural opportunity, increasing access to affordable health care and seizing our opportunities in renewable energy.

"In the past six years we have laid the foundation for a more prosperous Kansas. As we meet those commitments which will keep us on course, we must remove those barriers that still stand in our way," Sebelius said. "We must tackle the rising cost of health care and lift its burden from families and businesses across the state."

The governor's budget proposed strategic investments in early learning opportunities for young children, included a fourth year of the K-12 school finance plan and made college more affordable for Kansas students and families. All of these goals were addressed, but with fewer resources than the Governor recommended.

Additional job creation in Kansas continued as a top priority in 2008, with additional workforce development for aviation, support for the national Bio and Agro-Defense laboratory, and affordable housing for workers and their families. Growth and development in rural areas was encouraged with the creation of three offices for Rural Opportunity. All of these goals were achieved.

In spite of the Legislature's refusal to craft comprehensive energy policy for Kansas, renewable energy and energy efficiency efforts continued to advance, with support from the Administration. Utilities are well ahead of schedule on their agreements for new wind energy production and energy conservation efforts. At the end of 2008, Kansas will be the seventh state in the nation to reach 1,000 MW of wind energy, and the second state to do so without a government mandate. Plans are underway for new transmission projects, and the Bioscience Authority has accepted the aggressive challenge from the Governor to position Kansas as a national leader in bio-fuels production.

Once again the Legislature failed to address the rising costs and availability of quality health care for Kansas families. Prior to the start of the 2008 Session, Sebelius was joined by Republican and Democratic Senate leaders to endorse the Health Policy Authority's comprehensive recommendations for health reform. Despite efforts in the Statehouse and with stakeholders throughout Kansas, the Legislature failed to address these challenges once again.

"The Legislature formed the Health Policy Authority and asked them to come up with a plan," Sebelius said. "Once the recommendations were presented, they were ignored by legislative leaders. This will remain a top priority for my administration as we move forward."

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CAPITOL BUILDING, ROOM 212S, TOPEKA, KS 66612-1590
Voice 785-296-3232 Fax 785-296-7973 <http://www.ksgovernor.org>