

MINUTES OF THE HOUSE HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Jim Morrison at 1:37 P.M. on March 7, 2005, in Room 526-S of the Capitol.

Committee members absent:

Representative Brenda Landwehr- excused

Committee staff present:

Melissa Calderwood, Kansas Legislative Research Department

Mary Galligan, Kansas Legislative Research Department

Renae Jefferies, Revisor of Statutes' Office

Gary Deeter, Committee Secretary

Conferees appearing before the committee:

Deb Miller, Secretary, Kansas Department of Transportation

Howard Rodenberg, Director of Health, Kansas Department of Health and Environment

Others attending:

See attached list.

The minutes for March 2 were approved.

The Chairman welcomed Deb Miller, Secretary, Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT), and Howard Rodenberg, Director of Health, Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE), both of whom provided a briefing on the Kansas highway death and injury rate. ([Attachment 1](#)) Secretary Miller informed the committee of a three-agency alliance (KDOT, KDHE, and the Kansas Highway Patrol) to raise awareness for and begin discussion on reducing highway injuries and fatalities. She introduced Mike Bowen, Federal Highway Administration, saying KDOT is working with the federal agency to develop strategies that will reduce accidents, injuries, and fatalities. Ms. Miller cited statistics to illustrate that, though the highway death rate is diminishing slightly, is still considered serious:

- 456 individuals were killed on Kansas highways in 2004;
- some 2000 suffered disabling injuries;
- nearly 23,000 more suffered less severe injuries.

She said that, on average, a Kansan dies every day in a motor-vehicle crash, and every 21 minutes someone is injured. Noting that over 90% of these accidents were caused by driver error, she identified some causes: inattention, distraction, speeding, under the influence of alcohol or drugs, and not wearing a seat belt. Regarding seat belt use, she said 81% of Kansas children under 4 were belted, but, in the 5-14 age group, only half were properly belted, noting that Kansas ranks 43<sup>rd</sup> in seatbelt use in the U.S (68% in Kansas, 80% nationally). She concluded that Kansas should be a part of the national initiative to make reduction of highway fatalities a top priority.

## CONTINUATION SHEET

MINUTES OF THE House Health and Human Services Committee at 1:37 P.M. on March 7, 2005, in Room 526-S of the Capitol.

Howard Rodenberg continued by commenting that motor vehicle deaths are at epidemic levels, affecting more lives than any other health problem. He stated that the health costs of vehicle crashes are staggering, affecting the lives of 2500 Kansans each year, costing each Kansas citizen an average of \$1015; added to that is the emotional toll and productivity drain associated with vehicle accidents. He observed that accidents involving those not wearing seat belts resulted in 50% more injuries. He concluded by saying that solutions to the problem involve complex responses.

Members queried the conferees, which prompted the following responses:

Ms. Miller said 37% of accidents occur in rural areas (defined as outside a city's limits), but 75% of fatalities occur in rural areas, 99% of which are related to driver behaviors. She also explained that accidents in rural areas increase the emergency response time, delay which increases the likelihood of complications or death. She stated that the alliance works with many organizations to encourage safer driving, noting that the national seat-belt campaign ("Click It or Ticket") has been successful.

She replied that KDOT is examining the engineering aspects of safe roads, such as experimenting with larger glass beads as reflective material to increase visibility during rainstorms, but the key to lowering fatalities is driver education; she noted, for example, that higher fines produce higher compliance rates for seat-belt usage.

A member suggested that auto insurance companies might establish premium risk levels for such things as seat-belt compliance similar to life insurance policies that distinguish between smokers and non-smokers. Members commented on distractions, such as cell phones, and on other causes of accidents, such as sleep apnea and narcolepsy. A member noted that Kansas law requires someone with epilepsy to forego driving for six months following a seizure. Ms. Miller said the Federal Accident Reporting System is used to make sure statistic reporting is consistent. She promised to provide further information to members.

Staff provided a briefing for:

**SB 115**, which amends the statute that establishes requirements for investigation by the Kansas Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services (SRS) of reports of exploitation, abuse, or neglect of adults. If a criminal investigation is ongoing, the bill provides an additional 60 days for SRS to make a report, and the agency may include findings from the criminal investigation. Present law, which requires an investigation be completed and a report filed within 30 days, applies if there is no criminal investigation.

**SB 116**, which amends current law to allow injunctive authority to SRS to restrain or prevent the operation of certain facilities operating without a license. The bill is a response to an unlicensed facility in Newton taking advantage of mentally retarded individuals. Staff noted that, as the bill passed through the Senate, there were no opponents, that the Senate removed some committee amendments, and that the bill passed the Senate 39-0.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:53 p.m. The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, March 8, 2005.