

MINUTES OF THE HOUSE COMMERCE AND LABOR COMMITTEE

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Steve Brunk at 9:02 a.m. on February 4, 2009, in Room 784 of the Docking State Office Building.

All members were present except:

Representative Bob Bethell- absent

Committee staff present:

Renae Jefferies, Office of the Revisor of Statutes
Jerry Donaldson, Kansas Legislative Research Department
Dennis Hodgins, Kansas Legislative Research Department
Stephen Bainum, Committee Assistant

Conferees appearing before the committee:

Jim Garner, Kansas Department of Labor

Others attending:

See attached list.

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Steve Brunk at 9:02 a.m. Jim Garner, Kansas Department of Labor appeared to give the Committee an update to his earlier report. He spoke of improvements in six areas. He said that the Department had 37,000 first time claims for unemployment benefits in December 2008. The number for December 2007 was 18,000. The first improvement was the establishment of an Emergency Unemployment Compensation Processing Unit, dedicated to dealing with the Extended Benefit Program. This is the program that was taking six to seven weeks to process claims. The backlog of claims has been reduced from 7,400 to less than 300 applications to be processed. That program will be caught up this week.

The second improvement was to the website and phone system. The website can now accept e-mail address changes and password resets. The goal of this improvement is to reduce calls to the center. They have also added queues to the phone system to handle questions about the debit cards and 1099 tax forms.

The third thing mentioned was the hiring of more help in the centers. Ten were hired in December and they have now added 20 more to handle claims.

Fourth, extended hours of operation will be starting next week. Currently the hours are 8 to 4 Monday thru Friday, except closing at 3:30 on Thursday. The new hours will be 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. plus Saturday 8 to 5 p.m. The website will also be running on Saturday. The extended hours of operation will be tried for 60 days to see what the impact is on the Call Center.

The fifth area of improvement was that the Department is working with employers and unions that are having large layoffs. There have been some good responses from employers to this program.

Finally, Mr. Garner introduced the new liaison, Megan Ingmire as Kansas Department of Labor Liaison for Government Affairs. She will be available to answer inquiries and gather information for Representatives who may be receiving complaints from their constituents.

HB 2068 Real estate brokers and salespersons; licensure; deactivation.

The Chairman called for **HB 2068** to be worked and asked for questions. There were no questions. **Representative Grange made a motion to pass HB 2068 out favorably. Representative Schwab seconded the motion. The motion carried.**

The Chairman asked the Committee to consider working **HB 2067** at the next meeting. He reminded the Committee of the next meeting with Blake Flanders of Workforce Development.

The next meeting is scheduled for February 5, 2009.

The meeting was adjourned at 09:33 a.m.