

## MINUTES OF THE SENATE COMMERCE COMMITTEE

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Julia Lynn at 8:30 a.m. on Thursday, January 15, 2015, 548-S of the Capitol.

All members were present except:

Senator Susan Wagle – Excused

Committee staff present:

Reed Holwegner, Legislative Research

Debbie Bartuccio, Committee Assistant

Norm Furse, Office of Revisor

Edward Penner, Legislative Research

Conferees appearing before the Committee:

Deputy Secretary Michael Copeland, Kansas Department of Commerce

D. Keith Meyers, Director of Training Services, Workforce Services, Kansas Department of Commerce

Zoe Thompson, Director, Workforce Training and Education, Kansas Department of Commerce

Others in attendance:

[See Attached List](#)

### **Bill introductions**

Chairperson Lynn asked if there were any bill introductions and there were none.

### **Workforce Development**

Chairperson Lynn recognized Michael Copeland, Deputy Secretary, Kansas Department of Commerce, who presented an overview concerning workforce development and initiatives. ([Attachment 1](#)) Deputy Secretary Copeland stated the Workforce Services division links businesses, job candidates and educational institutions to ensure that employers can find skilled workers. The Division provides services to assist employers and job seekers, including incentives and training, assistance with closings and mass layoffs, disability resources and **KANSASWORKS** virtual services. He said the Department also works with military veterans and employees with special needs. In addition to these services, the Department partners with other agencies including the Department of Labor and the Department for Children and Families to provide reemployment and training services, and the Department of Corrections and Board of Regents on workforce initiatives. His testimony included information concerning the workforce system, workforce aid and the Second Chance Act Grant.

Senator Faust-Goudeau commented concerning the negative effect which past convictions may have on an applicant's ability to be hired, and inquired as to whether the programs of the Second Chance Act were benefiting past offenders in this regard. She also asked if the state of Kansas offered a program in which corporations hiring past offenders were offered tax benefits. In response, Deputy Secretary Copeland stated because the unemployment rate has declined and it has become increasingly difficult for businesses to find talented individuals, some of the employers have been modifying the guidelines

## CONTINUATION SHEET

MINUTES of the Committee on Commerce at 8:30 am on Thursday, January 15, 2015, 548-S of the Capitol.

being followed when hiring staff. Keith Meyers, Director of Training Services, Workforce Services, responded with examples of the Division's efforts in working with corporations to hire prior offenders who have completed training programs in preparation for job opportunities. In terms of the tax credit, he replied the federal work opportunity tax credit is available for corporations hiring individuals coming out of incarceration. There are also federal bonding opportunities which businesses can take advantage of.

Senator Denning inquired as to whether the training programs take place at the job site or at special training centers. Deputy Secretary Copeland responded the training programs take place at many venues, but primarily at colleges and technical schools. Senator Denning posed a scenario and asked if there was an industry with a need for 20 technical staff, would the Department consider partnering with that industry to provide this unique training? Zoe Thompson, Director, Workforce Training and Education, responded affirmatively this would be an option, and provided several examples of the Division partnering with corporations. A pre-hire model is being utilized in which the potential applicants are hired, pending the successful completion of the training program.

Senator Lynn shared her experience in meeting with two young men participating in SkillsUSA programs, and reflected about the importance of providing students in the K-12 level, as well as those in post-secondary institutions, with educational opportunities concerning programs that lead to jobs. Director Thompson said, for some individuals, a Workforce Aid program might be a good first start as a short term program resulting in an industry credential at the end of the program and a job. Senator Lynn stated in addition to the technical training, the SkillsUSA program also provides soft skills training to the students. Director Thompson confirmed soft skills are also an important aspect of the Workforce AID programs.

Senator Melcher questioned the employer's flexibility and control concerning retention of the applicant once training has been completed. Director Thompson responded businesses have full control over the viability of the applicants hired for the positions.

Senator Lynn inquired as to how the Workforce Services Division has been working with the Kansas Department of Labor to facilitate the transition from unemployment to employment. Deputy Secretary Copeland responded the two departments have created an active working committee who identify opportunities to improve the movement of unemployed individuals to the workforce. Senator Lynn requested the departments provide an update at the 2016 session concerning the success of this collaboration effort.

At the conclusion of the question and answer session, Senator Lynn adjourned the meeting at 9:10 a.m. The next meeting is scheduled for January 20, 2015.