

MINUTES OF THE SENATE COMMERCE COMMITTEE

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Julia Lynn at 8:30 am on Wednesday, January 27, 2016, 548-S of the Capitol.

All members were present except:

Senator Tom Holland – Excused

Senator Susan Wagle – Excused

Committee staff present:

Debbie Bartuccio, Kansas Legislative Committee Assistant

Reed Holwegner, Legislative Research Department

Edward Penner, Legislative Research Department

Chuck Reimer, Office of Revisor of Statutes

Conferees appearing before the Committee:

Secretary Lana Gordon, Kansas Department of Labor

Justin McFarland, Deputy General Counsel and Legislative Liaison, Kansas Department of Labor

Others in attendance:

[See Attached List](#)

Chairperson Lynn acknowledged receipt by the Committee of a Workforce Development Monitoring Activities Report from John Bowes, Director, Regulatory Compliance, Legal Services, Kansas Department of Commerce. ([Attachment 1](#))

Possible bill introductions

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

Presentation on:

Chairperson Lynn recognized Secretary Gordon, Kansas Department of Labor, who reviewed the 2015 Annual Report. The report included information on: the roles of the Kansas Department of Labor, unemployment insurance, Labor Market Information Services, workers compensation, industrial safety and health, legal services, unemployment insurance fraud and special investigations, and fiscal year 2015 actual expenditures.

Secretary Gordon said from December 2014 to December 2015, 6,928 individuals were added to the labor force. There were 1,451,271 people employed in December 2015. The number of individuals claiming unemployment benefits dropped from 28,185 individuals at the first of the year to 18,024 at the end of 2015. The Department's Safety and Health consultants conducted more than 520 safety and health visits at Kansas businesses during the year. These visits identified 1,342 serious hazards in a variety of industries. The Workers Compensation Division assisted more than 17,530 injured workers,

CONTINUATION SHEET

MINUTES of the Committee on Commerce at 8:30 am on Wednesday, January 27, 2016 in Room 548-S of the Capitol.

insurance agents, attorneys, employers and health care providers with questions about the Workers Compensation Law. The emphasis placed on preventing unemployment fraud yielded significant results in 2015. The unit closed more than 12,000 fraudulent cases related to unemployment insurance benefits. ([Attachment 2](#))

Chairperson Lynn recognized Justin McFarland, Deputy General Counsel and Legislative Liaison, Kansas Department of Labor, who presented an overview concerning Kansas labor market conditions. ([Attachment 3](#))

Chairperson Lynn opened the meeting for questions.

Secretary Gordan and Mr. McFarland addressed several questions from Senator Melcher related to charts provided in the testimony.

Senator Denning inquired as to the definition of a person in the labor force. Mr. McFarland responded the labor force consists of the working age population, which is those 16 years or older, who are noninstitutionalized. Individuals are considered to be in the labor force if they are employed or are unemployed but are actively seeking a job. A person who is not employed, and who is not actively seeking employment, is not considered to be a part of the labor force.

Secretary Gordan responded to questions from Senator Baumgardner and Senator Faust-Goudeau concerning the program in which the Kansas Department of Labor has joined the Kansas Sheriff's Association in the development, planning and initial implementation steps of a database allowing for the comparison of incarcerated individuals and unemployment claims. Individuals who are incarcerated typically are not eligible for unemployment benefits due to not being "able and available" to obtain employment.

At the conclusion of the question and answer session, Mr. McFarland told Committee members that providing quality customer service is a priority at the Kansas Department of Labor, and the Department is available to assist with constituent questions.

Chairperson Lynn adjourned the meeting at 9:28 a.m. The next meeting is scheduled for January 28, 2016.