



Kansas Professional Engineer

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School Finance and Elections Shape Session

By: Ron Gaches, Executive Director

The beginning of each year brings state legislators back to Topeka as reliably as birds crowd the freshly-filled feeders in my backyard. January 9 was no exception. Forty senators and 125 state representatives filled the Statehouse, getting reacquainted with their colleagues and looking for their new office locations.

Their discussions grew serious in a hurry. Waiting for legislators was the much anticipated school finance report by the Legislative Post Audit staff. Their findings shocked most legislators - somewhere between \$400-600 million in additional state spending is required to bring school spending into compliance with last year's Supreme Court order. Even more alarming, the Post Audit report indicates the state's school finance obligation is a moving target. As state and federal student competency standards are elevated the demand for additional dollars will continue. School finance has been at the center of state budget decisions the past several years and will continue as the big budget driver for the next several years.

But not every discussion will center on schools. It is an election year after all. All state representatives and state-wide offices (led by the race for Governor) are up for election. A myriad of other issues will have their time for headlines, among them campaign finance reform, workers compensation, tax relief for businesses and home owners, restrictions on eminent domain, expansion of health care insurance and restrictions on stem cell research.

Throughout the session, KSPE will be in the Statehouse, reviewing bill introductions, monitoring hearings and advocating for the interests of Professional Engineers. On occasion we will be asking you to contact your legislators on issues of importance to your Society. When you do, please act promptly and professionally. Timely contacts from constituents are our most influential lobbying tool. In the meantime, look for our weekly Legislative Reports to be in your email in-box first thing every Monday during the session. Additional Action Alerts will be on an as needed basis.

CTP Funding and Tax Policy Top Agenda

By: Ron Gaches, Executive Director

KSPE legislative policies are reviewed each fall by the Legislative Affairs Committee chaired by Mike Lackey, PE and Committee recommendations are acted on by the full KSPE Board of Directors. This year's agenda is very similar to the past several years, with added emphasis on state tax and economic development policy.

Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP) - Kansas has benefited enormously from the state's 10-year commitment to enhancing transportation

infrastructure. In addition to the obvious safety improvements, our outstanding state highways also facilitate the movement of commerce and promote economic expansion. Kansas is at the crossroads of America. Our location is a natural resource that warrants investment and protection.

Tax Payer Bill of Rights (TABOR) - Fiscal conservatives have long argued for tighter spending controls and greater protection against state tax

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increases. To achieve both they support TABOR, a state constitutional amendment that would place a cap on state spending increases and require any state tax increase to receive a two-thirds majority in both the House and Senate and then be approved by a vote of the people. KSPE believes passage of TABOR would make it very difficult to approve a funding mechanism for whatever state transportation plan follows the current CTP. The amendment also assumes that the current

state budget adequately funds all state programs. But future requirements for additional school finance funding and increased Medicaid funding could put great pressure on the remaining parts of the state budget, jeopardizing funding for the Comprehensive Transportation Plan.

Eminent Domain – a U.S. Supreme Court decision last summer specifically authorizing use of eminent domain for economic development purposes has shaken property rights advocates into introducing a flurry of proposals to prohibit or limit

such action. In Kansas, eminent domain has been used sparingly for economic development projects and each of those has its critics and supporters. KSPE remains neutral on the use of eminent domain for economic development purposes but will closely monitor action on the proposals to ensure they do not restrict use of eminent domain for traditional public infrastructure projects like highways, schools, hospitals, utilities, pipelines and bridges.

**Kansas Society of Professional Engineers
2006 Annual Conference
June 28-30, 2006
Doubletree Hotel, Overland Park, Kansas**

Mark your calendar and be sure to join us this June in Overland Park for continuing education, networking and socializing. Speakers will address topics dealing with disaster experiences and solutions such as what we've learned from Katrina, how the threat of terrorism has changed the design of buildings and what local communities in Kansas are doing to prepare for natural disasters.

Details on a golf tournament, Young Engineers Roundtable and registration information will be available soon. We look forward to seeing you in June!

Kansas Dam Safety Program

Dam owners interested in extending the life and safety of their dams, and professionals interested in expanding their understanding of dam safety issues, are invited to attend the Dam Safety Conference 2006 sponsored by the Kansas Department of Agriculture's dam safety program.

The two-day conference will be Feb. 22 and 23 at the Radisson Broadview Hotel, 400 West Douglas Avenue, in Wichita. It will feature nearly 40 sessions covering

embankment dam design, dam inspections and maintenance, and water quality.

Frank Calcagno, hydropower security committee chairman for the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, is the keynote speaker.

The agenda includes a field trip to area dams and an emergency action plan exercise, as well as luncheons and an evening social.

Registration is \$65 per person, and it includes meals and a session book.

Certificates documenting professional development hours will be available to attendees at no charge.

To learn more about the conference, or to view the conference agenda, visit www.ksda.gov/Default.aspx?tabid=182, or contact Beth Cooper by phone at (785) 296-0573 or by email to bcooper@kda.state.ks.us.

President's Message:

By: Shawn O'Leary, P.E.

As we turn the corner on our KSPE year, I want to reflect on some positive observations that I have made to this point. First and foremost, Ron Gaches and I made six chapter visits from September through December that proved to be a highlight of my 20 years as a member of KSPE. All of the chapters were gracious hosts and offered great support and motivation toward our mission of KSPE and NSPE. I saw many old friends and made several new acquaintances. At each stop, I was taken by the sincere dedication that each group of members has for this organization and for the professional practice of engineering.

It was an honor to start our visits in my home chapter of Smoky Valley in Salina (three blocks from my house) with perhaps the best attendance numbers of any single chapter. Next, we enjoyed the hospitality of the joint meeting of the Eastern and Topeka chapters at the historic railroad depot in Lawrence. It was humbling

to share the floor with Dean Stuart Bell from KU. Then we made the trip to Great Bend where the Golden Belt chapter treated us to Chinese cuisine. There was a small group of six members in attendance, but what a privilege it was to break bread with three previous state presidents. Our next stop was a sports bar in Wichita where we had some great laughs with the Wichita chapter members. Finally, we made the journey to Iola and the infamous Ken's Pizza for a great meeting with the Southeast chapter. My sincere thanks to all of these fine chapters for the good work that you do for KSPE.

Our message to the chapters has been a very positive and candid one. Membership is steady and growing slightly. Finances are as stable as they have been for many years. The KSPE state leadership is young, energetic and diverse representing five of the ten chapters and comprising the practice divisions of government, private practice and education. All annual

state and chapter programs have gone well or are ready to go. Leadership training has been provided to future leaders in the chapters. NSPE issues have stabilized and the Future Directions Task Force appears to be delivering on their promise to make NSPE a more state-centric organization. And, finally, two new programs are in the development stage including a PE Recognition Ceremony with the Governor and a Coalition of Engineers/Architects/Surveyors to address like issues.

Thanks so much for your continued support of our important mission of KSPE. Good luck with MathCounts and Awards programs in the next month or two.



Future City Competition-Volunteers Needed

The mission of the National Engineers Week Future City Competition is to provide a fun and exciting educational engineering program for seventh- and eighth-grade students that combines a stimulating engineering challenge with a "hands-on" application to present their vision of a city

of the future.

The Kansas competition will be held at the Kansas University Student Union on January 28th and we NEED volunteers. The judges will need to be there from about 8am to 2pm. Dress is business

casual. Lunch and breakfast will be provided. If you are interested in being a judge, please contact C.W. Harper at harper@ksdot.org or (785) 393-9139. For more information visit <http://www.futurecity.org/>.

State MATHCOUNTS Competition

MATHCOUNTS® is a national enrichment, coaching and competition program that promotes middle school mathematics achievement through grassroots involvement in every U.S. state and territory. With over 22 years of experience, MATHCOUNTS is one of the country's largest and most successful education partnerships involving volunteers, educa-

tors, industry sponsors and students. President George W. Bush and former Presidents Clinton, Bush and Reagan have all recognized MATHCOUNTS in White House ceremonies. The MATHCOUNTS program has also received two White House citations as an outstanding private sector initiative. Particularly exciting for our Mathletes® were the hour-long ESPN

programs on each of the past three National Competitions.

The Kansas MATHCOUNTS Competition will be held March 11, 2006 in Salina. For information on chapter MATHCOUNTS Competitions, please visit <http://www.kansasengineer.org/Calendar.htm>.

Passing Champions Leave a Void

By: Ron Gaches, Executive Director

None of us know how much time we will have on this earth. So it behooves us to live our lives fruitfully, contributing to the fabric of our communities, our families and our professions.

Recently, our KSPE family lost two gentlemen who were connected in ways both great and small, Wilmer Freund, PE and Larry Hole, PE. Wilmer and Larry were separated by a generation, but were connected by a life long quest for learning and a deep commitment to improving the lives of all around them.

Wilmer practically invented the role of the county engineer in Kansas and his outstanding service to community and profession spanned many decades. Wilmer never quit at anything. He never retired from anything. He gave generously of his time to all until the ravages of disease consumed his body. He was the ultimate team player, never seeking attention for his thousands of hours as a volunteer, but always willing to step forward and lead the way when leadership was needed. More importantly, Wilmer made sure that all the other people who deserved recognition were recognized. His proudest mo-

ments were spent finding those whose outstanding contributions might have been overlooked, if not for Wilmer.

Larry was probably the most intellectually curious man I've ever met. A life-long student, Larry was always looking for the next challenge. Not for attention or because of boredom, but because he wanted to be better prepared to involve himself in the professional and personal challenges that he knew lay ahead. I remember fondly our discussions about whether law school was a fit place for an engineer and how he might apply his education and experience. Larry understood that the rules and ethics that govern the practice of engineering aren't limiting, they are enabling. He felt a personal responsibility to ensure the right rules were in place to guide his peers, and in all his professional activity helped to remind us we are accountable for our actions.

Both Wilmer and Larry were mentors. They cared more for the generations to follow than they did for themselves. They were trailblazers showing how it could be done, leading by example and contributing selflessly. Kansas has produced many

great Professional Engineers, but no two have mentored more young people into becoming engineers. And once they brought young people into engineering, they modeled the way engineers are supposed to be, thoughtful, honest, deliberate and caring.

In addition to both being active members of the Wichita Chapter of KSPE, Wilmer and Larry were connected in another way. When Larry was a senior in high school he wanted to follow an engineer for a day to help determine whether he should study engineering at the university. The engineer he shadowed that day was Wilmer Freund, and a lifelong friendship developed.

We are a richer and better place for the many contributions of these two wonderful men. Their passing leaves a great void in their community and profession. It is our good fortune that they mentored many excellent young engineers. Wilmer and Larry's great works will live on in the many contributions of their young protégés over the years to come.

KSPE MEETINGS AND ACTIVITIES CALENDAR

2006

January 19-23	NSPE Winter Meeting	Washington, DC
February 3	Executive Committee Meeting	Topeka
February 4	Wichita MATHCOUNTS Competition	Wichita
February 8	Eastern Chapter MATHCOUNTS Competition	Overland Park
February 11	Topeka MATHCOUNTS Competition	Topeka
February 11	Smoky Valley/Tri Valley joint MATHCOUNTS Competition	Salina
February 18	Southeast MATHCOUNTS Competition	Pittsburg
February 25	Hutchinson MATHCOUNTS Competition	Hutchinson
March 11	Board Meeting and State MATHCOUNTS Competition	Salina
April 7	Executive Committee Conference Call	
May 5	Executive Committee Meeting	Topeka
May 11-14	National MATHCOUNTS Competition	
June 28-30	Board Meeting and Annual Conference	Overland Park