Host Communications has entered into a partnership with ESPN Regional Television to market multimedia rights at the University of Kansas, a deal that will pay the athletic department $65 million during the next 10 years.

This deal, announced April 16, replaces an agreement Kansas had solely with ESPN Regional. That contract, negotiated two years ago, would have paid $40 million during seven years and was scheduled to expire in 2012.

KU's new $65 million deal is on par with one Florida State University struck with ISP Sports earlier this year, a 10-year contract worth $66 million.

Host will be in charge of selling, producing and distributing radio broadcasts, as well as coaches' television shows and TV broadcasts of any games not part of the Big 12's package. Host also will print and sell advertising for game-day programs, and handle hospitality, corporate sponsorships, signage and the school's athletic Web site.

ESPN Regional will have a role in KU's TV production and distribution.

"We have a premier lineup of schools, and I think they liked the lineup they'd be in," said Tom Stultz, president and CEO of Host, based in Lexington, Ky. "We're also not handling any of their in-state or neighboring rivals, so the Kansas brand is going to get 100 percent of our attention."
Jim Davis

Arena gets founding partner

Sprint Center's newest sponsor won't have to worry about a lack of exposure: Its brand will be on televisions throughout the arena.

Syntax-Brillian Corp., whose brands include Olevia televisions, is Sprint Center's fourth "founding partner." The sponsorship deal is part of a larger agreement with arena operator and investor Anschutz Entertainment Group.

Chris Thomas, vice president of corporate sales for Sprint Center, said the deal will place high-definition Olevia LCD TVs throughout the concourses and suites — about 300 units in all.

He said that Sprint Center will be the first AEG property to be fully outfitted with Olevia sets but that the sponsorship will put the sets in AEG arenas and stadiums throughout the country.

Syntax-Brillian joins UMB, Farmland Foods and The University of Kansas Hospital as founding partners.

Brian Kaberline
TOPEKA, Kan. (AP) — Gov. Kathleen Sebelius signed a series of bills Thursday designed to cut the tax burden of businesses and some Kansans by about $32 million in the coming fiscal year.

The largest of the eight new laws phases out over five years the tax businesses pay for the privilege of operating in Kansas, a cumulative savings of $135 million. Other cuts would help seniors by exempting Social Security benefits from state taxes, increase a property tax refund for home owners 55 and older and increase a tax credit for the working poor.

Legislators approved the cuts in early April before taking their three-week spring break. They also have approved a $12.3 billion budget that covers the bulk of the state's spending for the next fiscal year, which begins July 1.

Sebelius sought to raise the threshold at which businesses pay the franchise tax so that it applied to firms with a net worth of $1 million or more. But legislators maintained that eliminating it altogether would improve the business climate and create more jobs.

In signing the bill, Sebelius cautioned that eliminating the tax could create revenue problems in future years.

"As we move forward with this multyear proposal, I intend to continue to urge the Legislature to reconsider the out years of this tax cut, and instead substitute other business tax relief measures which could result in increasing jobs and growing the economy," she said in a statement.

Sebelius said the state cannot afford to erode its tax base, "so we have to make choices."

Legislators were pleased with Sebelius' decision to sign the bills. House Speaker Melvin Neufeld said legislators were right to return some of the state's unanticipated revenue growth to taxpayers, while still funding state government.

"We will stimulate much more in job and revenue growth in Kansas by returning unexpected revenue back into our economy than if we increase state spending," said Neufeld, R-Ingalls.

Business leaders also praised the tax cuts, saying the reductions will allow companies to invest more in their operations and work force.
"Our members have been frustrated with the franchise tax for years," said David Cross, president of the Kansas Livestock Association. "The franchise tax is a burden on farming and ranching operations trying to build equity to maintain financially strong business."

Sebelius also signed a bill that would establish the Johnson County Education Research Triangle, allowing local officials to raise property and sales taxes to fund development of bioscience facilities. Revenue generated by the taxes, if approved by voters, would go for the construction of research centers for the University of Kansas and Kansas State University in Johnson County.

The measure is the latest in the state's ongoing efforts to attract and expand bioscience research and industry in Kansas.

"Bioscience research has an amazing potential for new treatment and cures. We want those cures to be discovered in Kansas," Sebelius said. "That's why we've made the recruitment of bioscience companies a top priority and why we've invested in bioscience research and education at our universities."
Governor Signs Series Of Bills For $32 Million In Tax Cuts

By JOHN MILBURN
Associated Press Writer
TOPEKA (AP) - Gov. Kathleen Sebelius signed a series of bills Thursday designed to cut the tax burden of businesses and some Kansans by about $32 million in the coming fiscal year.

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University of Kansas student Tiffany Spriggs signs a memorial banner to be sent to Virginia Tech while in front of Wescoe Hall at KU Tuesday in Lawrence. Spriggs is from West Virginia, about 30 miles from Virginia Tech.

Associated Press
Gaines couple donates $1 million to cancer research

Special to The Gazette

WICHITA - Former state senator and Augusta attorney Franklin D. Gaines, knows firsthand what it takes to battle cancer.

During a press conference yesterday at the University of Kansas School of Medicine-Wichita (KUSM-W), Gaines, CEO and chairman of the board of directors for the First National Bank in Fredonia, and his wife Beverly, announced a gift of $1 million to support cancer research by funding a professorship at the University of Kansas Cancer Center.

In 2003, Gaines, a cancer survivor, was appointed by Gov. Sebelius to the Kansas Board of Regents. He was also a former state representative.

"When I received my diagnosis about 13 months ago, I traveled to Mayo Clinic for my care and treatment, but not everyone can afford to do that. I heard Chancellor Hemenway speak to the Board of Regents about how having an NCI-designated cancer center would benefit our entire state. This is an extremely important endeavor that will allow people in Kansas to receive their care without traveling far away and so I am very happy to help get KU closer to their goal," Gaines said.

The gift puts Kansas Masonic Foundation over two-thirds of the way in its goal to reach $15 million in its Partnership for Life fundraising campaign to support the Kansas Masonic Cancer Research Institute, the research arm of the University of Kansas Cancer Center.

The income earned on endowed funds such as this provide salary support, travel expenses and other costs associated with advancement of a professorship. The gift will be managed by KU Endowment Association, an independent, nonprofit organization serving as the official fund-raising and fund-management organization for KU. Founded in 1891, KU Endowment is the first foundation of its kind at a U.S. public university.

The gift will create an endowed professorship for the University of Kansas Cancer Center and support the cancer initiatives at KUSM-W.

CANCER on Page 2
The Franklin D. and Beverly J. Gaines Professorship will be used to support the medical director of the University of Kansas Cancer Center oncology outpatient unit. This physician will be responsible for developing the research program which will enroll patients in phase I clinical trials in Wichita. He will also be an integral member of the University of Kansas Cancer Center phase I drug program and the drug discovery and experimental therapeutics program for the Midwest Cancer Alliance.

"This gift is a demonstration of Frank and Beverly Gaines' commitment to helping others across Kansas and the region," said Jeff Sowder, president of Kansas Masonic Foundation. "It is because of gifts like this that the Partnership for Life campaign will be successful in its quest to assist KU in its efforts to bring an NCI-designated cancer care center to the Midwest."

The University of Kansas School of Medicine-Wichita is nationally recognized as a pioneer in community-oriented medical education. Since the first class graduated in 1975, 1,458 physicians have earned medical degrees. About half of these eventually established practices in the state, fulfilling KUSM-W's promise of "Educating Doctors For Kansas."

Attending the announcement were KU Chancellor, Robert Hemenway; Dean S. Edwards Dismuke, MD, MSPH, KUSM-W; Jeff Sowder, president, Kansas Masonic Foundation; Roy Jensen, MD, director, University of Kansas Cancer Center, state legislators and business leaders.
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TOPEKA (AP) — The most significant tax measures signed Thursday by Gov. Kathleen Sebelius:

**FRANCHISE TAX**
Relief, next fiscal year: $7 million.
Relief, during five years: $135 million.
The tax is a fee for the privilege of doing business in Kansas and is assessed against the value of a business' assets, $125 for every $100,000, for all businesses with at least $100,000 in assets. The tax is capped at $20,000.
The threshold would rise to $1 million for 2007.
The tax rate would then drop to $94 for every $100,000 of assets for 2008, $63 for 2009, $31 for 2010 and be repealed for 2011.

**HOMESTEAD PROGRAM**
Relief, next fiscal year: $10.5 million.
Relief, during five years: $58 million.
The program provides state refunds of up to $600 against the property taxes paid by homeowners 55 and older, based on their incomes, if their household incomes are $27,600 or less.
As of July 1, the highest possible refund will increase to $700.
Also, half of their Social Security benefits wouldn't count when their incomes are calculated to determine whether they are eligible.

**SOCIAL SECURITY**
Relief, next fiscal year: $5.4 million.
Relief, during five years: $56.9 million.

The state taxes a portion of seniors' Social Security benefits, up to 85 percent, if their household incomes are at least $25,000.
For 2007, Social Security benefits would be exempt from taxation if a person's household income is below $50,000. For 2008, the threshold would rise to $75,000.

**EARNED INCOME CREDIT**
Relief, next fiscal year: $7.5 million.
Relief, during five years: $45.8 million.
The federal government provides an income tax credit to low-wage workers. Single workers with no children qualify if their incomes are less than $12,000; married workers raising two or more children can receive a credit if their household incomes are less than $38,000.
The state provides its own income tax credit, 15 percent of what a person receives as the federal credit.
The top federal credit for a single worker with no children is $412, making the top state credit $62. The top federal credit for married workers with two or more children is $4,536; the top state credit, $680.
The state's credit would rise to 17 percent of what a person receives as the federal credit.

Source: Kansas Legislative Research Department.
kindergarten — that magical time when children learn to read, write, share graham crackers and say the “Pledge of Allegiance” — was once considered the starting line of education.

Not anymore.

A new movement is gaining momentum in Kansas and elsewhere, as experts in neuroscience, education, psychology and politics consider the importance and impact of a child’s earliest years.

Kids don’t begin learning in kindergarten, they say. They begin in utero. First cries, first words, first scribbles with a crayon, all are critical. They spark a brain into action. They affect whether a child starts school ready to learn.

And how kids start, experts say, is our first and best clue to how they’ll finish.

What does ‘ready’ mean?

In Kansas, any child who turns 5 before Sept. 1 can start kindergarten.

But not every 5- or even 6-year-old has the cache of knowledge, motor skills and self-control they need to function well in a classroom.


“But oh, goodness, it’s more than that.”

“Ready to learn” — a phrase being chanted like a mantra by educators and advocacy groups — means more than showing up. More, even, than singing the alphabet or counting to 10.

“Ready to learn” means using the bathroom by yourself, sharing a toy, listening to a story, being curious. It means holding a pencil correctly, treating books gently, asking questions and taking turns.

“We’re talking about kids having academic skills, but also the social and emotional skills they need to be successful,” said Shannon Cotsoradis, executive vice president for Kansas Action for Children, which collects and analyzes data about children’s well-being.

The group recently launched “Ready or Not,” a public awareness campaign focused on the need for greater access to early health care, literacy programs and publicly funded pre-kindergarten.

According to some nationwide estimates, Cotsoradis said, one in three children starts school “not prepared for success.”

And research shows that children who start behind tend to stay behind. Long-term studies in Chicago, Michigan and North Carolina found that children who attended high quality pre-K programs were more likely to graduate from high school, be employed and earn higher wages than peers who did not attend pre-K. They also were less likely to require special-education services, become teen parents or be arrested for a violent crime.

Babies’ brains matter

So what causes some children to start school reading, while others can’t distinguish print from pictures?

Early experiences, says Bruce Perry. Lots of them, built up in the brain like bricks in a child’s tower of potential.

Perry, senior fellow of the Houston-based ChildTrauma Academy and a leading authority on child development, says brain research proves how a child’s earliest years affect his future.

By a child’s third birthday, more than 80 percent of his brain is formed, Perry says; by age 5, more than 90 percent. Simple, seemingly insignificant moments — singing lullabies, playing peek-a-boo — become the foundation for everything a child needs to
knowledge: how to talk, how to read, how to think, how to love.

For example: A mother touches her baby’s nose and says, “Is that your nose? I see your nose! Lemme kiss that cute little nose!” Then, she grabs the baby’s feet. “And there are your toes! I’m gonna tickle those toes . . .”

The mother smiles. The baby giggles. What you can’t see, Perry says, is what’s happening inside the baby’s brain. Loving smiles and simple words, repeated over and over, turn chaos into understanding. “Sounds become words, and words become meaning, and meaning becomes language,” Perry said. “Those moments, that repetition, those loving exchanges — they’re profound.”

Measuring readiness

This fall, for the first time, officials will test 2,100 public school kindergartners, including some in Wichita, to gauge school readiness statewide.

The Kansas Health Institute, in cooperation with the state Department of Education, the University of Kansas and other partners, is developing assessments that will measure a range of skills, from literacy to social interactions.

“Until now, we haven’t really had a systematic way of understanding how ‘school-ready’ children are,” said Robert St. Peter, a pediatrician and president of the Kansas Health Institute. “This will give us some look at how we’re doing, but even more importantly, the ability to track it over time.”

The assessment, which will cost about $400,000, is being funded by the Kansas Health Foundation.

Researchers are using bits and pieces from established tests, such as the Devereux Early Childhood Assessment and the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test, and will train about 50 early-childhood professionals to perform the test this fall.

Children will be chosen at random for the test to reflect racial, ethnic and gender balances, as well as urban and rural school districts.

Each child selected will take a 20-minute portion of the survey. Researchers will combine those results with social and behavioral assessments reported by teachers to create an overall measure of school readiness.

Officials are careful to note that the test will not evaluate specific children, or be used to keep kids from starting school. “Whether a child is judged to be ready or not, they shouldn’t be excluded . . . That’s not what this is about,” said Susan Palmer, an associate professor at KU who is helping to create the test. “It’s about getting a snapshot of where our state is, and then talking about what we should do to get better.”

The institute hopes to present the results to lawmakers before the 2008 legislative session.

The new test marks a notable shift for Kansas, which just five years ago had no plans to measure school readiness.

Today, still fewer than half of U.S. states perform statewide assessments, “which puts Kansas right up toward the top,” said Lisa Klein, director of a 17-state initiative on school readiness.

The reason, she said, is the growing number of politicians, business leaders and others who are aligning behind early childhood education. Gov. Kathleen Sebelius made pre-kindergarten a rallying cry of her re-election campaign last year. And the Kansas Health Foundation, The Opportunity Project and Visioneering Wichita have put early childhood at the top of their agendas.

Investment gap

Despite some progress, early childhood advocates point to what they call a “major investment gap” in state and federal spending.

A 2004 report by Kansas Action for Children showed that education spending is significantly greater during a child’s school-age years than from birth to 5. For every $1 of state and federal spending on education, only about 11 cents goes toward early childhood.

And a recent Education Week report ranked Kansas among the lowest in the country in per-capita spending on early-childhood programs.

During a tour of Kids’ Cove, a Wichita child care and pre-kindergarten program run by Rainbows United, local lawmakers saw some of the state’s pre-K money at work.

Freshman Rep. Raj Goyle, D-Wichita, smiled as he watched 3-year-old Alisyn Leitzel scoop sand and play with plastic toy bugs, then don a princess costume and listen to a story on tape.

“We know what works. . . . It’s just a matter of putting money where it needs to be,” Goyle said. “And right now, there are a lot of different interests out there.”

So far, only a portion of Sebelius’ proposed budget for early childhood — a $1.6 million expansion of Early Head Start — has passed the Legislature. When lawmakers return for their wrap-up session this week, they will consider spending $1 million to improve infant/toddler child care and $3.5 million to expand the state’s pre-K pilot program.

Advocates aren’t optimistic all the measures will pass.

“What we need to get to is a sense of urgency. That’s what’s missing in the conversation,” said Cotsoradis, of Kansas Action for Children. “Of course investments in public school make sense. But we can’t just start when a child enters kindergarten. We need to focus on the earliest years, where it can have an even bigger impact.”

For parents like Charlotte Gantt, who attends a weekly parent-child play group at Little Early Childhood Education Center in Wichita, even simple things make a difference.

“Things I learn here, I take home,” said Gantt, who last week helped her 3-year-old daughter, Marie, make a color flip book out of pictures and plastic baggies. “She’s already learned a lot of the things
she'll need in school," Gantt said.

Rocha, the former teacher who also runs the play group for Wichita CARES, a partnership of school and health officials, said she's glad more Kansans are focusing on school readiness.

"From the time a child is born, everything that happens to that child and to that family affects how prepared that child will be for school," Rocha said.

"Setting the table, reading, talking about things, going places — parents are a child's first teacher. . . . Anything we can do to help make them better parents, we need to do it."

Reach Suzanne Perez Tobias at 316-268-6567 or stobias@wichitaeagle.com.

Theresa Hathaway watches her son David during a counting exercise in a class at the Little Early Childhood Education Center.
Alisyn Leitzel, right, listens to an audio tape of "Cinderella" with Rosa Jackson at Rainbows United Kids' Cove.
LAWRENCE (AP) — Political dialogue needs a little more humor like what Bob Dole used to disarm critics and amuse supporters, Howard Baker told a Lied Center audience Sunday night.

Baker, a former U.S. senator, presidential candidate and President Ronald Reagan's chief of staff, was in Lawrence to receive the Dole Leadership Award. It is named for Dole, a former U.S. senator from Kansas, and is presented annually to someone who promotes politics as an honorable profession.


"There was no place in the wedding ceremony that we had to support the same person for president," Baker told a University of Kansas crowd of about 750 Sunday night.

But it's too early for anyone to really know how the 2008 campaign will unfold, said Baker, who ran for president in 1980. There are so many candidates, he said, and each one who stays in the race for the duration will be under intense scrutiny.

"Anybody who says they can tell you how the election is going to turn out is not realistic," he said. "I'm going to try to get a Republican to win."

Baker said he recalls feeling like a youngster before his first date with Kassebaum Baker long after the death of his first wife.

"I stood on one foot and then the other and she came to the door. I said, 'I feel like a 12-year-old.' She said, 'You don't look like a 12-year-old.'"

The two were married in 1996, and Baker called their relationship "one of the great things that's happened in my life."
Democratic Gov. Kathleen Sebelius signed into law Thursday a sweeping package of income, property, sales and franchise tax reductions adopted by the Republican-controlled Legislature.

Sebelius also approved a bill authorizing the creation of the Sebelius Johnson County Education Research Triangle. The partnership involving The University of Kansas and Kansas State University would be initiated if Johnson County voters approve a property tax hike to support bioscience research and education.

"Bioscience research has an amazing potential for new treatments and cures," Sebelius said. "We want those cures to be discovered here in Kansas."

On the tax front, Republican leaders in the House said they were gratified the governor accepted the entire tax-relief package produced by the Legislature.

"These tax cuts will lessen the burden for Kansas seniors and the disabled who rely on Social Security, for businesses of all sizes who want to expand in our state, and for those on limited incomes," said Rep. Kenny Wilk, R-Lansing, chairman of the House Taxation Committee.

The legislation was a compromise between the House and Senate.

A substantial change for busi-

Please see CUTS, Page 12A
Cuts: Seniors, businesses aided

Continued from Page 1A

ness owners results from a bill phasing out the corporate franchise tax over five years.

In addition, starting with tax year 2007, the exemption threshold for companies subjected to this tax rises to $1 million of net worth from the current $100,000. This frees about 16,000 small businesses in Kansas from the tax.

The bill will be responsible for an estimated $135 million in savings to businesses by the time the franchise tax vanishes in 2011.

David Cross, president of the Kansas Livestock Association, said members of the cattlemen’s organization would celebrate demise of this disliked tax.

“The franchise tax is a burden on farming and ranching operations trying to build equity to maintain a financially strong business,” he said.

In January, Sebelius recommended the $1 million floor for the franchise tax. Despite signing the bill, she again expressed concern total elimination of the tax also would benefit the state’s largest

AT A GLANCE

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The tax rate would then drop to $94 for every $100,000 of assets for 2008, $63 for 2009, $31 for 2010 and be repealed for 2011.

Homestead program
Relief, next fiscal year: $10.5 million.
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The state’s credit would rise to 17 percent of what a person receives as the federal credit. That would make the top state credits $70 for a single worker with no children and $771 for a married worker with two or more children.

Source: Kansas Legislative Research Department.

The Associated Press

businesses.

Another piece of legislation signed by the governor lowers income taxes for retired or disabled Kansans. Social Security benefits will now be exempt from state income tax for these individuals earning less than $50,000. In 2008 and thereafter, taxpayers with incomes of $75,000 or less will be exempt from state tax on Social Security benefits.
Over five years, the payoff for taxpayers is estimated to be $58 million.

Another bill signed into law increases refunds available to homeowners and renters under the Homestead Property Tax Refund Act. The maximum credit will rise to $700, up from $600, for people with total annual household income under $28,000. It is worth an estimated $58 million in the next five years.

Ernest Kutzley, advocacy director of the AARP of Kansas, said this kind of "targeted" property tax relief was overdue for older Kansans living on fixed incomes.

The reform package included sales tax exemptions for a long list of not-for-profit groups, including the American Cancer Society, Lions Clubs and the Dream Factory.

In addition, the state will permit expansion of local sales tax authority in Wabaunsee, Jefferson, Riley, Franklin, Miami and Linn counties. A state sales tax exemption for farm machinery and equipment was broadened to include "precision" agriculture equipment that is either portable or installed on other machinery.

House Speaker Melvin Neufeld, R-Ingalls, said rising state revenue this year made the tax reduction possible. He put the windfall to the state treasury at $140 million.

"As responsible legislators, we used this opportunity to establish new tax policy to keep our state's economy growing," Neufeld said.

Sebelius has signed 159 bills and vetoed three bills adopted during the 2007 session.

The Legislature returns to Topeka on Wednesday for its wrap-up session to conclude work on the state budget and complete unfinished business.

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