Sebelius rejects bill giving KU Hospital veto on affiliation

Gov. Kathleen Sebelius on April 23 vetoed a budget proviso that would have given The University of Kansas Hospital board veto power over proposed academic and research affiliations between KU Medical Center and Saint Luke's Hospital of Kansas City.

Adoption of the proviso on April 3 was one of the Legislature's final actions before approving a $12.3 billion state budget and adjourning until the April 25 wrap-up session.

During that session, Sebelius' veto could be overturned. But it would require a two-thirds vote of both houses, meaning 83 votes in the House and 27 in the Senate.

Sebelius and leaders of an effort to establish Kansas City as a leading U.S. life sciences region also have argued that KU Medical Center affiliations with Saint Luke's are key to that effort and the medical center's goal of winning National Cancer Institute designation.

Officials at KU Hospital, the medical center's primary teaching hospital, view the proposed affiliations with Saint Luke's as a threat to the volume and quality of care KU Hospital delivers.

KU Medical Center and KU Hospital leaders have agreed that a final affiliation pact based on guiding principles could be achieved by May 31. Board members for Saint Luke's Hospital, meanwhile, have set a June 30 target date for a finalized agreement.

On April 19, Sebelius signed a bill authorizing the Johnson County Education and Research Triangle, a partnership supporting bioscience research and education at existing and planned KU and Kansas State University facilities in the county.

The bill allows Johnson County voters to establish the Johnson County Education and Research Triangle Authority. Voter approval also would authorize as much as a 0.2-cent sales tax increase, a property tax of as much as 2 mills or a combination of the two.

The authority would be required to disperse proceeds in equal shares for use at the KU Edwards campus in Overland Park, the new K-State campus planned in Olathe and a KU Medical Center facility planned for Westwood.

The proceeds, estimated at $15 million to $23 million a year, initially would be used to build three new buildings, one on each campus.

Rob Roberts
Senate passes $630 million repairs plan, but House balks

By John Hanna
Associated Press Writer

TOPEKA — A five-year, $630 million plan for fixing crumbling buildings on the state’s higher education campuses won overwhelming Senate approval Friday but failed in the House.

The bill would provide no-interest loans from the state and anticipates setting aside future gambling money for repair projects. It also would authorize tax credits to lure dollars from private donors.

The six state universities, which officials say are desperately short of maintenance funds, would receive most of the aid, but some would go to community colleges, vocational schools and Washburn University in Topeka.

Senators passed the bill, 36-4, and its leaders had hoped for quick approval in the House, which would have sent it to Gov. Kathleen Sebelius and resolved the biggest budget issue still facing legislators.

But the House, where members have struggled to find an acceptable plan, voted 71-51 against the bill. Its leaders scheduled debate for Saturday on a five-year, $106 million proposal drafted by its Appropriations Committee.

“The House has a plan that we haven’t even had a chance to consider,” committee Chairwoman Sharon Schwartz, R-Washington, told her colleagues during their debate on the Senate bill. “I think you better stop and think through what your decision is.”

But some House members were frustrated with talk of delay.

“What we’re dealing with today is not a ‘want’ issue but a ‘need’ issue,” said Rep. Paul Davis, D-Lawrence, whose district includes part of the University of Kansas campus. “If we put this off further, it’s just going to cost us more money.”

The debate about crumbling higher education buildings isn’t confined to Kansas. A report last year from APPA, formerly the Association of Physical Plant Administrators, estimated universities nationwide have a $36 billion backlog of projects.

Although aid would go to community colleges and vocational schools, the universities’ worries have driven the Kansas debate.

The Board of Regents, which oversees higher education, estimates the universities have a $663 million backlog of repairs and need an additional $69 million a year for maintenance to keep that backlog from growing.

Regents Chairman Nelson Galle praised the Senate for its “critical leadership” and labeled the plan “impressive” and “visionary.”
SENATORS TAKE UP $630 MILLION PLAN

By JOHN HANNA
The Associated Press

TOPEKA — A plan for giving state universities $630 million over five years to fix long-neglected buildings faced scrutiny Friday in the Senate, a day after the House rejected a far more modest proposal.

The Senate proposal mixes no-interest loans, anticipated gambling dollars and using tax credits to lure dollars from private donors. It also provides some help to community colleges, vocational colleges and Washburn University in Topeka.

Senate leaders hoped their chamber would pass it Friday and send it to the House. The final version of a repairs plan will be written by House and Senate negotiators after the two chambers approve rival bills, but so far, the House has had trouble settling on a plan.

A House plan would have set aside $100 million for university repairs over three years, but when it was offered as an amendment to a bill meant to wrap up budget issues for the year, it failed, 61-61. Some House members questioned whether the state could afford it, while others derided it as insufficient.

Universities’ deteriorating buildings are a pressing issue to higher education officials and legislative leaders. The Board of Regents, which oversees higher ed, estimates that universities have a $663 million backlog of repairs and need an additional $69 million a year for maintenance to keep it from growing.

“The thing is, we know it’s a huge problem. We know we have to do something about it,” said Rep. Barbara Ballard, D-Lawrence, whose district includes part of the University of Kansas campus. “I think we will, but like everything else, it’s not an easy process.”

The Senate plan is designed to be a comprehensive solution for the universities, while aiding the other institutions.

It includes $200 million in no-interest loans, though it doesn’t say how the institutions receiving them would pay them back.

It sets aside $115 million in revenues from new casinos and slot machines at dog and horse tracks, allowed under legislation approved this year. Also, it assumes nearly $65 million in private funds, leveraged by tax credits.

The Senate Ways and Means Committee drafted much of the proposal last week, and the Assessment and Taxation Committee finished up work on the measure Thursday.

The House’s vote Thursday came a day after its Appropriations Committee failed to endorse a multiyear repairs plan and some members suggested legislators might give the universities a one-time infusion of cash and study their problems this summer and fall.
House repair plan fails, Senate plan emerges

BY JOHN HANNA
The Associated Press

TOPEKA — A modest plan for helping state universities fix long-neglected buildings narrowly failed Thursday in the House, while a much larger plan cleared a Senate committee.

The House plan would have set aside $100 million for university repairs over three years, but when it was offered as an amendment to a bill meant to wrap up budget issues for the year, it failed, 61-61. Some House members questioned whether the state could afford it, while others derided it as insufficient.

Senators’ plan would provide $640 million to the universities, community colleges, technical colleges and Washburn University in Topeka over the next five years. The total includes gambling dollars, no-interest loans and tax credits for private donors.

The Ways and Means Committee drafted much of the proposal last week, and the Assessment and Taxation Committee finished up work on the measure Thursday. The Senate planned to debate it Friday.

Universities’ deteriorating buildings are a pressing issue to higher education officials and legislative leaders. The Board of Regents, which oversees higher ed, estimates that universities have a $663 million backlog of repairs and need an additional $69 million a year for maintenance to keep it from growing.

“The thing is, we know it’s a huge problem. We know we have to do something about it,” said Rep. Barbara Ballard, D-Lawrence, whose district includes part of the University of Kansas campus. “I think we will, but like everything else, it’s not an easy process.”

The House’s vote came a day after its Appropriations Committee failed to endorse a multiyear repairs plan and some members suggested legislators might give the universities a one-time infusion of cash and study their problems this summer and fall.

And some conservative Republicans don’t think the state can afford to commit to setting aside tens of millions of dollars without creating budget problems.

“At what point are we willing to draw the line and say we’re not willing to spend money hand over fist?” said Rep. Lance Kinzer, R-Olathe.

Rep. Bill Otto, R-LeRoy, said such plans are geared toward helping the University of Kansas and Kansas State University far more than smaller universities or community colleges. Otto said smaller institutions “don’t come crying to us, wanting more money.”

According to the regents, the two biggest universities account for 63 percent of the backlog.

“I don’t have any sympathy,” said Otto, who voted “no” and pledged to keep doing so.

On Wednesday, Appropriations Committee chairwoman Sharon Schwartz said she had no plans to take up the repairs issue again. But she scheduled a meeting for Friday to discuss drafting a new plan and said she’d been approached by committee members who wanted to take another run at it.

“Yesterday, there didn’t seem to be any interest,” she said.

The House plan also lost votes because some legislators thought it was too small.

“It does not actually address the real need that we have,” Rep. Lee Tafanelli, R-Ozawie, the Appropriations Committee’s vice chairman, said during the debate. “What we need is a long-term, comprehensive plan.”

But other House members said the modest plan would send a positive message — acknowledging the final version will be written by House and Senate negotiators after the chambers pass rival bills.

“The longer it’s put off, the farther behind they’re going to get,” said Rep. Shirley Palmer, D-Fort Scott, a retired teacher who served on the Board of Regents from 1987 to 1993. “This is far from what is needed, but it’s a start.”

The Senate plan designed to be a comprehensive solution, but it also would provide some of its aid to the other institutions.

It includes $200 million in no-interest loans, though it doesn’t say how the institutions receiving them would pay them back.
Volunteer group formed in 2005 to promote the health and well-being of the people of Allen County was born as the University of Kansas Work Group for Community Health and Development and grew up to become Thrive Allen County, Brian Wolfe explained to Iola Rotarians Thursday.

“We decided to call the organization ‘Thrive’ because that’s what we wanted Allen County to do,” he said.

Thrive has been supported by grants from the Reach Foundation which was created with funds from the sale of Health Midwest to Hospital Corporation of America. Grants are made to Allen County organizations because Allen County Hospital was part of the Health Midwest group at the time of the sale.

Wolfe said Thrive has applied for a three-year grant which will allow it to hire a full-time director and in time a part-time employee to maintain an office at Jackson and North Street which is owned by the city.

Thrive’s 18-member board of directors includes persons from many business and professional areas. Its vision is to see that “Allen County will be a place people want to live because it’s safe and healthy.” To that end, its mission is “To make assessible a safe environment with recreation, education, and health services for every citizen in Allen County.”

Thrive’s priorities, he said, are to encourage high quality medical and health services, dental care, recreational services, transportation services, healthy life style education, educational programming, communications and personal safety with an emphasis on providing protection against violence and abuse.

Wolfe said Thrive would serve more as a coordinator than a provider.

He and other members of the board who attended Thursday’s meeting as club members or guests said that many services such as transportation for those who have no way to get to a physician, to shop or to take...
Thrive

(Continued from page 1)

advantage of a recreational opportunity already exist but that many do not know of them or have a way to contact them.

Thrive hopes to become a hub for information about the public services available and to provide or facilitate coordination among them, they said.

Its field of interest is broad. In the health service area, for example, Thrive will work to recruit health care workers, improve medical care for the poor, encourage wellness programs, establish a health resource center, encourage and assist the work of the public health department and promote urgent care alternatives.

To expand dental care, Thrive will recruit dentists, promote awareness of the importance of dental care, help families get funding for dental care for their children and help with the SafeBase dental care program.

To meet the need for more recreation programs Thrive will identify recreational needs and seek to find ways to provide them, establish county recreational centers and programs and help develop plans to improve swimming facilities.

To improve communication among Allen Countians and the organizations and agencies that exist to provide services to the public, Thrive will develop a Web site where such information can be found, will create and publish a catalog of the public and private resources already in place and will create a comprehensive local calendar of events.

As these and other Thrive projects come to fruition articles describing them will be published in the Register.

Wolfe illustrated his presentation with slides with the assistance of his wife, Susan Lynn, who is Thrive board secretary. He was introduced by Susan Raines, program chairman and a member of the Thrive board. Other board members present were Nancy Maier, vice chairman, and Judy Brigham. Wolfe is Thrive chair.
University repairs still in play

TOPEKA, Kan. (AP) — A plan for giving state universities $630 million over five years to fix long-neglected buildings faced scrutiny today in the Senate, a day after the House rejected a far more modest proposal.

The Senate proposal mixes no-interest loans, anticipated gambling dollars and using tax credits to lure dollars from private donors. It also provides some help to community colleges, vocational colleges and Washburn University in Topeka.

Senate leaders hoped their chamber would pass it today and send it to the House. The final version of a repairs plan will be written by House and Senate negotiators after the two chambers approve rival bills, but so far, the House has had trouble settling on a plan.

A House plan would have set aside $100 million for university repairs over three years, but when it was offered as an amendment to a bill meant to wrap up budget issues for the year, it failed, 61-61. Some House members questioned whether the state could afford it, while others derided it as insufficient.

Universities' deteriorating buildings are a pressing issue to higher education officials and legislative leaders. The Board of Regents, which oversees higher ed, estimates that universities have a $663 million backlog of repairs and need an additional $69 million a year for maintenance to keep it from growing.

"The thing is, we know it's a huge problem. We know we have to do something about it," said Rep. Barbara Ballard, D-Lawrence, whose district includes part of the University of Kansas campus. "I think we will, but like everything else, it's not an easy process."

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The Senate Ways and Means Committee drafted much of the proposal last week, and the Assessment and Taxation Committee finished up work on the measure Thursday.
Senate OKs repair funds

By JOHN HANNA
Associated Press Writer

TOPEKA, Kan. (AP) — A plan for giving state universities $630 million over five years to fix long-neglected buildings won Senate approval Friday, as the House continued to struggle with the issue.

The Senate proposal mixes no-interest loans, anticipated gambling dollars and using tax credits to lure dollars from private donors. It also provides some help to community colleges, vocational colleges and Washburn University in Topeka.

The vote was 36-4 and sent the measure to the House, where even far more modest plans have foundered.

The most optimistic senators hoped the House could give the measure quick approval and send it to Gov. Kathleen Sebelius.

Senate Majority Leader Derek Schmidt, R-Independence, voted in favor of the bill.

“I think it is an excellent, excellent, visionary piece of legislation,” Senate Minority Leader Anthony Hensley, D-Topeka, said.

Some senators were concerned their more generous proposal didn’t provide enough safeguards to make sure the universities spend the money on critical projects.

“We should be focusing on the needs that our constituents are talking about,” said Sen. Tim Huelskamp, R-Fowler. He successfully amended the bill to prohibit money from being spent on athletic facilities or presidents’ residences.

House members rejected a three-year, $100 million plan Thursday, forcing its Appropriations Committee to draft another. Emerging Friday was a plan to provide $106 million over five years, without relying on loans or gambling dollars.

“It’s really a pared-down version of what we started with,” said Chairwoman Sharon Schwartz, R-Washington. “It’s not a comprehensive plan.”

Schwartz also suggested lawmakers should pass a modest plan this year and study the universities’ needs this summer and fall. She said the issue has become too big to tackle with only a few days left in the legislative session.

But that prospect doesn’t please some House members. Rep. Bill Light, R-Rolla, said further study “accomplishes nothing except more talk.”

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Regents, which oversees higher education, estimates universities have a $663 million backlog of repairs and need an additional $69 million a year for maintenance to keep it from growing.

Sen. Vicki Schmidt, R-Topeka, read from a newsletter she received this spring from the University of Minnesota, where one of her sons is a student. The newsletter noted Minnesota lured away a highly regarded pharmacy researcher from the University of Kansas by promising her a state-of-the-art lab.

“This is the reason we need to do this bill,” Schmidt said.

Still, some legislators, particularly conservative Republicans, have questioned whether the problem is as severe as the regents say.
House rejects college repair proposal

TOPEKA (AP) — A five-year, $630 million plan for fixing crumbling buildings on the state’s higher education campuses won overwhelming Senate approval Friday but failed in the House.

The bill would provide no-interest loans from the state and anticipates setting aside future gambling money for repair projects. It also would authorize tax credits to lure dollars from private donors.

The six state universities, which officials say are desperately short of maintenance funds, would receive most of the aid, but some would go to community colleges, vocational schools and Washburn University in Topeka.

Senators passed the bill, 36-4, and its leaders had hoped for quick approval in the House, which would have sent it to Gov. Kathleen Sebelius and resolved the biggest budget issue still facing legislators.

But the House, where members have struggled to find an acceptable plan, voted 71-51 against the bill. Its leaders scheduled debate for Saturday on a five-year, $106 million proposal drafted by its Appropriations Committee.

“The House has a plan that we haven’t even had a chance to consider,” committee Chairwoman Sharon Schwartz, R-Washington, told her colleagues during their debate on the Senate bill. “I think you better stop and think through what your decision is.”

But some House members were frustrated with talk of delay.

“What we’re dealing with today is not a ‘want’ issue but a ‘need’ issue,” said Rep. Paul Davis, D-Lawrence, whose district includes part of the University of Kansas campus. “If we put this off further, it’s just going to cost us more money.”

Other House members apparently didn’t think much of the smaller proposal the House planned to debate today. A small, bipartisan group gathered after the House adjourned for the night to work on an alternative.

The Senate, meanwhile, adjourned until Monday.

The debate about crumbling higher education buildings isn’t confined to Kansas. A report last year from APPA, formerly the Association of Physical Plant Administrators, estimated universities nationwide have a $36 billion backlog of projects.
Senate passes $630 million repairs plan but House balks

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But the House, where members have struggled to find an acceptable plan, voted 71-51 against the bill. Its leaders scheduled debate for Saturday on a five-year, $106 million proposal drafted by its Appropriations Committee.

The Senate plan included $200 million in no-interest loans, though it doesn’t say how the institutions receiving them would pay them back. Community colleges, vocational schools and Washburn would have first priority.

The measure would set aside $115 million in revenue from new casinos and slot machines at dog and horse tracks, allowed under legislation approved this year. Also, it assumes nearly $65 million in private funds, leveraged by tax credits.

During her chamber’s debate, Sen. Vicki Schmidt, R-Topeka, read from a newsletter she received this spring from the University of Minnesota, where one of her sons is a student. The newsletter noted Minnesota lured away a highly regarded pharmacy researcher from the University of Kansas by promising her a state-of-the-art lab.

“This is the reason we need to do this bill,” Schmidt said.

Still, some legislators, particularly conservative Republicans, have questioned whether the problem is as severe as the regents say. Conservatives also wonder why critical maintenance projects haven’t been addressed in past years.

Sen. Tim Huelskamp, R-Fowler, questioned whether the Senate bill provided enough safeguards to ensure the universities spend the new dollars on critical problems. He successfully amended the bill to prohibit money from being spent on presidents’ homes or athletic facilities — but voted “no” nonetheless.
House passes $313 million repairs plan

BY JOHN HANNA
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS
TOPEKA — A five-year, $313 million plan to fix deteriorating higher education buildings won overwhelming House approval Saturday, allowing negotiations to begin immediately with the Senate, which backed a costlier plan.

The House plan, approved 122-2, would set aside $80 million for repairs on state university campuses and use an equal amount of tax credits to lure $153 million in private contributions for projects at universities, community colleges and vocational schools.

Senators approved a $630 million plan Friday, one that also sets aside state dollars and authorizes tax credits. The Senate proposal includes $200 million in loans, with community colleges, vocational schools and Washburn University of Topeka getting first priority, as well as $115 million in revenues from casinos and slot machines at dog and horse tracks authorized this year but not operating.

House members were optimistic about reaching an agreement quickly with the Senate so both chambers could consider it Monday and end the session that started Jan. 8.

"This isn't the greatest bill, probably, but I think it gets us in the right direction," Rep. Bill Feuerborn, D-Garnett.

Senators were less optimistic. The chamber's lead negotiator, Ways and Means Committee Chairman Dwayne Umbarger, didn't think the House plan was big enough, though it was triple the size of plans House members had previously considered.

"There's very little new money," said Umbarger, R-Thayer. "They haven't made a reasonable effort to deal with deferred maintenance. The state needs to dedicate more resources than what they put into it."

Passage of the repairs bill in the House also allowed the leaders of its Republican majority to resurrect a $308 million spending bill needed to wrap up budget issues for the year.

That bill failed Friday because of a revolt among GOP conservatives who thought it spent too much and because other members withheld votes until the proposal on higher education repairs passed. The vote on the budget bill Saturday was 71-53.

After the House adjourned Saturday, three senators and three House members began negotiating over both measures. They were trying to agree on a higher education repairs plan first.

"You have to have it settled before you can settle the budget, because you don't know what numbers to put in there," said House Speaker Melvin Neufeld, R-Ingalls.

Administrators, estimated university campuses and vocational schools, the universities' worries have driven the Kansas debate.

The Board of Regents, which oversees higher education, estimates the universities have a $663 million backlog of repairs and need an additional $69 million a year for maintenance to keep that backlog from growing.

The Senate approved its plan Friday on a convincing 36-4 vote, but only hours later, the House voted 71-51 against it.

That left the only apparent alternative a $106 million plan drafted earlier by the House Appropriations Committee.

But a bipartisan group immediately began meeting to draft a new proposal, and they unveiled the $313 million plan during caucuses Saturday morning.

After Saturday's vote, Sue Peterson, assistant to Kansas State University's president, said: "I'm pleased the process is moving."

The lopsided vote didn't mean that House members were free of misgivings.

Rep. Tom Sloan, R-Lawrence, voted "no" even though his community includes the University of Kansas campus. He said the plan is inadequate.

"I don't think all of the necessary money is being made available," Sloan said. "The tax credits, I'm not convinced will actually raise the anticipated money."

Rep. Tim Owens, R-Overland Park, voted "yes" but suggested the anticipated private donations attracted by tax credits represent "speculative money."

And some House members still have lingering suspicions that university officials and the regents ignored some critical repair needs in years past.

University officials have said their campuses have been desperately short of maintenance dollars for
years. The last major legislative effort to deal with deferred maintenance was in 1996, when lawmakers authorized about $164 million in bonds to pay for repairs in a program dubbed “Crumbling Classrooms.”

Senate repairs plan is Sub for Senate Sub for HB 2237.

On the Net:
Kansas Legislature: http://www.kslegislature.org
Board of Regents: http://www.kansasregents.org