



KANSAS

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

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The following is a column by Governor Kathleen Sebelius:

Looking forward, moving ahead

As we welcome 2008, we look back on a year full of challenges, opportunities and accomplishments.

This year saw tens of thousands of Kansans going back to work as the state gained more than 23,000 new jobs, putting our unemployment rate below the national average. To build on this strength, we passed \$175.8 million in tax relief for employers and lifted the franchise tax on more than 16,000 small businesses.

Currently we are in the second year of a school finance plan and we have made a historic commitment to K-12 education. By the end of the third year, we will have invested over \$1 billion of new funds in education.

In addition, we are keeping our commitment to our children and making new investments in early childhood programs such as Head Start, pre-kindergarten pilots, providing more scholarship opportunities and important infrastructure improvements for higher education.

The Kansas Health Policy Authority has completed their task of presenting a comprehensive plan to reform our health care system. Their package of recommendations, if passed by the legislature, will lower costs and increase the quality of health care in Kansas.

Ice storms marked both the beginning and the end of 2007. A tornado devastated the community of Greensburg and floods ravaged much of southeast Kansas. As destructive as these events were, I cannot help but be moved and inspired at the way Kansans and first-responders worked to restore and rebuild these communities.

In late December, the Army announced additional forces at Fort Riley and Fort Leavenworth. The additional 1,500 soldiers and their families will generate an estimated \$400 million in economic activity for Kansas.

It has been a great year for the state of Kansas with numerous accomplishments to mark its passing. The state has emerged strong, despite the many challenges Kansans have faced. There will be many more challenges in the years ahead, but by working together and creating opportunities, the future will be bright.

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