



KANSAS

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

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***REVISED**

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The following is a column by Governor Kathleen Sebelius:

Reaching a more prosperous future

More than 32,000 Kansans have lost their jobs in the last year, the result of national unemployment reaching a level not seen in a quarter century.

The severity of these unemployment numbers underscore the fundamental challenge we face in our state - Kansans are struggling to put food on the table, stay in their homes and pay their medical bills. In times like these, we must remember that our state was founded by people who overcame incredible challenges because they were determined to build better lives for their families and future generations.

To that end, we must protect our investment in public schools and keep essential services in place for our most vulnerable citizens. It would be easy to surrender, and let the wave of recession push us back, but we must hold our ground.

In state government, we are already reducing spending, based on diminished resources. We have already cut \$300 million out of the 2009 budget, and I have proposed an additional \$600 million in reductions to the 2010 budget. I urge the Legislature to adopt these recommendations. These were difficult decisions, but they were absolutely necessary to stabilize the long-term structure of our state's budget.

Recently, President Obama signed the American Recovery Act, which contains the resources needed to help us get back on track and prevent further, more drastic cuts to our schools and safety-net services. Already we have learned about thousands of new jobs and millions in new revenue the Recovery Act will bring to Kansas. The Recovery Act also helps those who have lost their jobs in this recession by extending unemployment benefits, providing food assistance and continuing health care coverage.

The resources in the Recovery Act allow the Kansas Legislature to follow through on their commitment, made last session, to open the doors of affordable health care to 8,000 more Kansas children.

So while we still must make my proposed budget reductions for long-term stabilization, we must also use these one-time federal funds to help us navigate through the current recession, and reach a more prosperous future. Without these funds, we would see more layoffs and a longer economic downturn.

The national recession and its impact on Kansas cannot be ignored. But the opportunities before us cannot be denied. We have a chance to change the way we invest in our communities and our future. If we protect our schools, create cleaner forms of energy and open the doors of health care to all Americans, our economy will recover.

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