

## Message from the Governor

Kansas is an attractive place to do business and part of the reason for that is our low workers' compensation costs. Kansas' workers compensation rates are currently the eighth lowest in the nation, and employers have saved nearly \$113 million since the 1993 reforms were passed. At a time when most other insurance costs are rising, workers' compensation insurance premiums in our state will decline by 2 percent this year, saving our businesses an estimated \$3.5 million.

Benefits paid to workers injured on the job are the seventh lowest in the nation, and last year I signed a bill that makes it so Kansas businesses don't have to pay benefits to employees for drug or alcohol-related accidents. Additionally, pre-existing medical conditions are already factored into benefits, calling into question the need for this legislation.

Legislators would have been well-advised to listen to the veterans, fire fighters, nurses and seniors who all expressed their strong opposition to this bill.

Veterans have told me they're appalled that the physical hardships they endured during their military service would be used against them and I share their concerns. As Charles Yunker, Adjutant of the American Legion, Department of Kansas, testified, "Even those soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines not wounded or otherwise injured will be impacted simply because of the demands placed upon them during active duty." Following World War II, Kansas changed its laws to make sure returning veterans could easily re-enter the workforce. During a time when we have thousands of Kansans serving overseas, the idea of penalizing them for their military service is outrageous.

The Legislature's proposal would also allow a worker to be terminated simply because of an injury on the job. That's a slap in the face to the men and women who work hard every day to do their jobs in a safe and efficient manner, and it's simply wrong.

Therefore, in order to protect our workers and our veterans, pursuant to Article 2, Section 14 of the Constitution of the State of Kansas, I veto Senate Bill 461.

Vetoed            March 21, 2006

Signed            Kathleen Sebelius, Governor