

Welcome to the Senate

We are happy to have you visit the **Kansas Senate**. Hopefully, this information will be interesting and beneficial to you.

The Legislative Session always begins on the second Monday in January of each year and lasts for 90 calendar days. There are 40 Senators and each one represents approximately 60,000 people in his/her respective district. Each Senator is elected to a 4-year term.

In the Kansas Senate the majority party is traditionally seated on the North side of the Chamber. The Senate Leadership consists of the Senate President, Steven Morris from Hugoton, who presides over this legislative body. The Vice-President is John Vratil from Leawood. The Senate Majority Leader is Derek Schmidt from Independence, and the Minority Leader is Anthony Hensley from Topeka. Keeping with tradition, the Senate votes by voice vote.

The Chamber is located in the East Wing of the capitol building, the first section to be constructed. It was started in 1865 and completed in 1873. The first session was held in January of 1869, while still under construction. Originally both the House and the Senate met in what is now the Senate Chamber, with a divider down the center. In 1879 the West Wing was completed and the House held session in its own chamber for the first time.

The chamber as you now see it, was remodeled in 1885 at a cost of \$141,000. There have been very few changes in the appearance of the Chamber since that time. The Senators' desks are the original desks that were purchased in 1885. They are hand-made from Kansas wild cherry wood. The President's rostrum, backdrop and the Journal clerks' desk are crafted from Honduran Mahogany.

There are several kinds of ornately caved marble in the chamber. White Italian marble is found just below the gallery rail (the same kind of marble used in sculpting, as in Venus de Milo). The wide light-colored panel in the center is Onyx from Mexico. The blue-gray marble found on the bottom portion of the wall is from quarries on the Belgium-German border. The sand colored marble over the doors and archway is from Tennessee.

The columns are made of bronze and were hand hammered when crafted. The bases of the columns were air vents (not stoves) used to take cold air out of the room. The ceiling is molded of plaster and has yet to have major repair work. The stained glass windows were imported from France, with the center portion made of prismatic glass. The current chandeliers were added in 1973-74 and are made of aluminum alloy. They can be raised and lowered by cables.

The Senate chamber is open to visitors from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Monday through Friday when the Legislature is not in session. Please feel free to take pictures and look around the chamber. We hope you enjoy your visit. Staff members will be happy to answer any additional questions. Please come back again!