



Kansas Insurance Department

Sandy Praeger, Commissioner of Insurance

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 25, 2009

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Insurance department legislation would help laid-off workers with new federal health benefits

TOPEKA, Kan. – A Kansas Insurance Department-sponsored bill introduced last week in the Kansas House of Representatives would help Kansans who recently lost their jobs get health insurance provisions under the new federal stimulus legislation, according to Sandy Praeger, Commissioner of Insurance.

The legislation, HB 2390, introduced March 16, provides that certain Kansas employees who involuntarily lost their jobs since Sept. 1, 2008, can take advantage of the assistance in the federal law. The assistance would pay up to 65 percent of the cost of COBRA health insurance benefits for a laid-off worker for up to nine months.

The federal stimulus law amends COBRA (the Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act), which provides certain former employees the right to continue their health insurance coverage at group rates on a temporary basis.

“This legislation we are proposing might mean the difference between a family being able to keep their health insurance or losing it,” Commissioner Praeger said. “Maintaining health insurance during these difficult times may be possible by the implementation of state provisions of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.”

“Our department has been working since the federal law was implemented to have this bill introduced in the Legislature,” Commissioner Praeger said. “Weaving the intricacies of federal legislation with state legislation requires department and legislative cooperation in order to be successful.”

Employers can assist the process by reviewing their records of terminations from Sept. 1, 2008, to the present to document former employees’ coverage.

“We certainly want to help unemployed Kansans keep their health insurance benefits as they work to obtain new employment,” Commissioner Praeger said. “That’s one less stress point for them to contend with.”

The Kansas Insurance Department, established in 1871, assists and educates consumers, regulates and reviews companies and licenses agents selling insurance products in the state. More about the department is online at www.ksinsurance.org.