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For immediate release:
January 15, 2008

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Kansas Legislature Kicks Off Health and Wellness Program – *Kansas Health Policy Authority Unveils New Health Tool for State Employees*

In an effort to underscore the importance of healthy living, Kansas Legislators, state employees and others joined with the Kansas Health Policy Authority (KHPA) in launching the 2008 session with an emphasis on personal health and wellness.

At a statehouse health fair, the KHPA unveiled new health and wellness benefits offered through the State Employee Health Plan. Participants in the program are able to obtain health screenings and personal health assessments. These tools are reinforced by such new program offerings as access to 24-hour health information, coaching and support as well as targeted programs such as tobacco cessation, obesity prevention and diabetes management.

Also launched on Tuesday was a Legislative Health and Wellness Challenge organized and sponsored by the KHPA, along with the YMCA's of Kansas, Kansas Dietetics Association, and the Kansas Department of Health and Environment. This program will encourage lawmakers and others working in the statehouse during the session to eat sensibly and incorporate exercise into their daily routine. Last year a similar program initiated in the Kansas House generated great interest among lawmakers and served to remind lawmakers that good health starts with good individual choices. Participants in the program will be asked to log their weekly exercise and healthy lifestyle decisions throughout the 90-day session.

The new state employee health and wellness programs will be made available to all of the 72,000 enrollees in the current state employee health benefits program throughout Kansas. Onsite health screenings similar to what was launched in Topeka will take place at 51 sites across the state in 35 cities. Screening locations can be viewed at the following website: www.khpa.ks.gov/healthquest/screeninglocations.htm.

“Thanks to efforts like these, Kansans are continuing to demonstrate an important awareness and commitment to enhancing personal health,” said Kansas Governor Kathleen Sebelius. “The Kansas Health Policy Authority is making great progress toward establishing a proactive culture of health and these new tools will be incredibly important in making further health advances.”

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