

By EARL WATT • Daily Leader When the Kansas Legislature convenes in January, they will have an instant dilemma — how to fix the \$492 million shortfall.

There has been some positive signs of economic recovery, but not enough to fill the chasm left in the budget.

“This is a huge problem,” Holmes said. “It could lead to taking highway money to pay for education.”

With Huelskamp making the move to the U.S. House, Holmes is the only representative for residents in Seward County until a convention is called and held to replace Huelskamp in the Kansas Senate.

With the looming economic challenges, Holmes will be the lone voice in Topeka.

“For the first time in three years, projections are up slightly,” Holmes said. “But the stimulus money is going away. I’m against the stimulus, but it will create a bigger hole.”

The new Legislature may also have to address the coal-fired plants in Holcomb if no action is taken before the end of the year.

Earlier this week, Governor Mark Parkinson announced that Kansas Department of Health and Environment Secretary Rod Bremby was out, and Holmes said that John Mitchell will be the temporary replacement.

“Mitchell is a long-time employee of the department,” Holmes said. “I believe Mitchell will make a decision based on the facts and not on politics.” Mitchell was the head of the Division of Environment within the KDHE.

The permit needs to be signed before the end of the year or additional carbon regulations that have been handed down from Washington could complicate the issue.

“Knowing Bremby’s crowd, I couldn’t see any way where he was going to sign it,” Holmes said. “What does he have to lose by not signing it? Not signing it ensures him a position in Washington, D.C.” Speculation was that Bremby would be appointed to a position in the Obama Administration.