Co-workers value her ideas, energy

By John Collar
Kansan staff writer

As a KU administrator and state legislator, Barbara Ballard is concerned about the major issues affecting the state.

However, even though Ballard has a voice in crafting the state’s $8 billion budget, she sees her task in the Legislature as making the political system work for all citizens.

"You spend a lot of time going before committees, reviewing the statutes and just trying to get a minor change that can save people's lives and can make life easier for them," said Ballard, D-Lawrence, who has served in the House since 1992.

One of Ballard’s accomplishments is a 1994 student employment program that gave after-school and summer employment to 67 economically disadvantaged high school students in Kansas.

Yesterday, the House voted to reauthorize the program, called the Neighborhood Improvement and Youth Employment Act.

The program’s goal is to give students a stake in their communities while avoiding the pitfalls of gangs and drugs, Ballard said.

"If you take pride in your community, you’re not likely to tear it down," Ballard said.

Ballard’s colleagues on both sides of the aisle in the Legislature say she is a tireless lawmaker.

State Rep. Troy Findley, D-Lawrence, who shares an office with Ballard at the Statehouse, said representatives respected Ballard’s opinion, especially when she addressed the entire House.

"When she goes to the mike, people really listen to what she has to say," Findley said. "She usually has the attention of everyone in the room."

State Rep. Barbara Ballard, D-Lawrence, says she wants to make the political system work for all citizens. Ballard also is KU’s associate dean of student life and director of the Emily Taylor Women’s Resource Center.

Renee Speicher, Hutchinson graduate student, has been Ballard’s graduate assistant for five years. She said Ballard was a dedicated and student-oriented leader.

"Working with Barbara is like working with a friend," Speicher said.

David Hardy, associate director of the Organizations and Activities Center, said Ballard’s knowledge helped solve problems and build consensus at the University.

"Barbara seems to have a well of energy," Hardy said. "She just seems to keep going. She’s a great resource for the institution."