

## **Legislative Update – April 2022**

The last two years have been very busy, and leadership was pushing for us to complete our work as quickly as possible. The total bills submitted in 2021 and 2022 was 821 and as of April 13, 166 have been signed by the Governor to become law. That number represents a 20% of the bills becoming law. In the past two-year sessions, the total percentage becoming law averaged about 11%. Either we were very efficient, or we passed bills of lesser consequence and controversy thereby making it easier for the Governor to sign. I will allow you and history to decide.

Over the years I have sent out photos of the Tulip Festival in Wamego. It all came together beautifully last weekend when the city was full of people enjoying themselves.

### **2022 bills, resolutions, and concurrent resolutions that passed of greater importance:**

**Constitutional Amendment: HCR 5014** – Legislative oversight of administrative rules and regulations. The legislature has noticed a trend where the agencies were writing rules and regulations that we considered beyond the intent of the legislature. By the Kansas Constitution the legislature cannot stop the regulation that becomes law. This amendment simply gives the legislature the opportunity to review before it becomes law.

**SB 347** – Attracting Powerful Economic Expansion Act (APEX Program). This act gives the Governor and Secretary of Commerce major incentives to attract large businesses to move to Kansas.

**HB 2005** - Excluding hot water supply boilers that have a nominal water capacity not exceeding 120 gallons from the provisions of the boiler safety act. I entered this legislation to stop the State Fire Marshall from imposing undue hardship upon hotel/motel owners concerning their water heaters. The agency classified a water heater with a capacity 85 gallons as a boiler. That designation created a great deal of added federal regulations that made no sense.

**HB 2087** - Limiting the review of certain rules and regulations by the director of the budget and requiring review of rules and regulations every five years. I entered this bill to correct a procedure for reviewing rules and regulations to hopefully speed up the process.

**SB 367** – Custody and disposition of property seized by law enforcement. This creates a definite paper trail for all property seized and directions for return of any weapons seized if the individual is acquitted.

**SB 330** – Kansas Gold Star Families Memorial to be erected on the Capitol grounds.

**SB 58** – Parents Bill of Rights. The bill states that all parents have a right to direct the upbringing, education, care, and mental health of their child. (Parents already have these

rights guaranteed in the Constitution and previous legislation, and it is time those rights are exercised.) It was vetoed by the Governor and a veto override is being considered.

**SB 160** – Fairness in Women’s Sports. An act to require that student athletic teams only include members who are of the same biological sex unless designated as coed. It was vetoed by the Governor and a veto override is being considered.

**Sub. for SB 563** - This bill redraws the State’s 40 Senate districts (map name: Liberty 3), 125 House of Representatives districts (map name: Free State 3F), and 10 State Board of Education (BOE) Districts (map name: Apple 7) using data obtained from the 2020 Census. [Note: BOE map Apple 7 is based on the districts contained in Senate map Liberty 3.] The maps can be found at: [District Maps](#). I am pleased that my request to keep all of Wabaunsee County in the 51<sup>st</sup> District was granted.

**HB 2717** - Prohibiting Municipal Restrictions on Law Enforcement Cooperation; Limiting Municipal ID Cards. The bill prohibits municipalities from restricting law enforcement cooperation with Federal authorities. HB 2717 also prohibits the use of municipal identification cards from being utilized to satisfy state proof of identity requirements, including for voter identification.

**HB 2239** – Also known as the Taxation Omnibus amends law related to property tax, income tax, and sales tax. It contains 29 individual pieces, and the full bill and summary can be found at: [HB 2239](#).

**SB 267** – State Budget—Appropriations Bill. This is the one duty the legislature has each year by state constitutional law. This is the one bill the Governor has line-item veto authority and could veto portions of the bill. If signed as written, the ending balance for 2022 will be \$1.47 billion and for 2023 \$895 million. Additionally, each of the years will end with at least \$500 million in the rainy-day fund (officially called the budget stabilization fund). If you would like to study the entire document, go to: [SB 267](#).

**Legislation still pending:**

The Budget Omnibus bill is still to come during the veto session. This is generally the last bill to be considered before adjournment. It follows the April Consensus Revenue Estimate. If the estimates are better than expected or worse than expected, we will adjust the budget passed earlier either up or down and consider requests made by legislators that did not make it into the earlier budget.

Similarly, the Tax Committee can meet because they are an exempt committee to consider bills important enough to support the omnibus bill. The food tax reduction bill is one bill to be discussed for sure before the session ends.

The congressional map is being litigated in the courts so a final map will not be approved until later, but before June 1 at 12:00 p.m. which is also the deadline for candidates to sign up who are running for office. The Senate, House, and School Board maps were signed by the Governor.

I voted against the congressional maps which moved both Wabaunsee and Lyon Counties into the 2d District. While I understand the need to redraw the maps due to population shifts, I could not support the change since we have always been in the 1<sup>st</sup> District and have become active participants in the District.

**Other bills vetoed by the Governor:**

**SB 161** - Providing for the use of personal package delivery devices on sidewalks and crosswalks, exempting such devices from motor vehicle regulation and limiting additional municipal regulation.

**SB 199** - Providing for short-term, limited-duration health plans.

**SB 493** - Prohibiting cities and counties from regulating plastic and other containers designed for the consumption, transportation or protection of merchandise, food, or beverages.

**SB 395** - Substitute for SB 355 by Committee on Redistricting - Proposing congressional redistricting map ad astra two.

**Sen Sub for HB 2448** - Senate Substitute for HB 2448 by Committee on Public Health and Welfare - Requiring able-bodied adults without dependents to complete an employment and training program in order to receive food assistance.

**H Sub for Sub SB 286** - House Substitute for Substitute for SB 286 - Continuing the governmental response to the COVID-19 pandemic in Kansas by extending the expanded use of telemedicine, the suspension of certain requirements related to medical care facilities and immunity from civil liability for certain healthcare providers, certain persons conducting business in this state and covered facilities for COVID-19 claims until January 20, 2023, creating the crime of interference with the conduct of a hospital and increasing the criminal penalties for battery of a healthcare provider.

**Disappointments for me concerning well researched legislation that did not pass the legislature:**

**HB 2004** - Creating the right to appeal an involuntary discharge or transfer from an adult residential care facility. Also called “Charlie’s Bill” which was brought by Rachael Imthurn in memory of her late husband. It would regulate Assisted Living facilities. It had a hearing but went no further and because of the legal questions. We asked the Judicial Council to review it and make changes to the bill to conform to state and federal laws.

**HB 2686** - The water bill that we worked on for over a year was gutted in committee and the resulting bill did not come above the line in the House. Farm Bureau and KLA opposed the bill. I have met with the Legislative Post Audit Committee to request a Joint

Interim Committee in August to review the Groundwater Management District (GMD) laws and to continue progress to determine what, if anything, is needed in a new bill to be introduced in 2023.

**HB2023** - Changing to an eight-year simple average when determining values of agricultural land for purposes of property taxation. I brought this legislation after Ag Economists at KSU did the research on the best method to evaluate land. They found the eight year rolling average, which ends up being 16 years, is not as beneficial to farmers and ranchers or to county commissioners planning their revenue stream. All their research proved an eight year straight average was the best.

**HB2042** - Enacting the Kansas thrift savings plan act. I worked with financial experts to develop this retirement method that has worked well in some other states. It would have been another option besides KPERS, which is still underfunded and would help to save the state billions that we have to come up with every few years. We have added a billion to KPERS twice since I have been in the legislature.

**HB2043** - Ending legislator participation in KPERS and establishing an annual salary structure for legislators. I brought this legislation because I feel it is a conflict for legislators who are in the KPERS system to vote on KPERS legislation.

**HB2044** - Increasing KPERS employee contribution rate for school district employees and making appropriations for FY 2022 for the department of education for a pay increase for KPERS covered school district employees. I brought this legislation because the teacher portion of KPERS is the most underfunded and this would be a way to add to that fund.

### **Session Events:**

Chamber and committee work involved many long hours this year. In addition, there were many extra activities and events. I had four radio interviews, two TV interviews, and numerous Webex meetings. I hosted the Flint Hills Leadership Class at the Capitol. Linda and I attended the Kansas Republican Convention in Wichita, and I attended the Republican House Caucus retreat in Wichita. The Kansas Economic Outlook Conference was very informative. My Water Committee toured Water One treatment facility in Johnson County.

My speaking engagements and forums included Kansas Municipal Utilities, Pottawatomie/Wabaunsee County Founders Day Dinner, Flint Hills Lutherans For Life, Manhattan League of Women Voters, Manhattan Chamber, Riley County Republicans, Pottawatomie County Federation of Republican Women, and PhD students in the KSU Rural Resource Resiliency NSF Research Traineeship. I attended the award ceremony for Maple Hill Grade School and the announcement for the new biological facility, Scorpion, in Manhattan.

The 2022 legislative session is predicted to come to a close by April 29. After that time, I can best be reached at [ron.highland@house.ks.gov](mailto:ron.highland@house.ks.gov). Thank you for staying involved and interested in what is going on at the Statehouse. It is my honor to serve you.

With kind regards,  
Ron