

## **2014 Legislative Update No. 1 from Ron Highland, Representative of the 51<sup>st</sup> District**

The session has started as fast paced as we left off last year. When you consider the issues being discussed on every corner and then add election year politics, it makes for an atmosphere of excitement.

The two year budget passed last year is again a topic of discussion. The Governor wants to correct some budget items and is asking for additional funding for others, such as all-day kindergarten. There are more really big issues coming. What is the Kansas Supreme Court going to say about the school funding case they heard last year? Where will the 400 – 600 million dollars come from if they decide to direct the State to increase the funding by that amount? I will keep you apprised of this as events unfold.

The Governor, during his State of the State address, gave notice to the Kansas Supreme Court to leave school financing to the People's House. This statement garnered the most applause and a standing ovation. He also reviewed the financial status of the State and the migration of businesses into Kansas. Three years ago the state only had \$876 in the bank and today we have more than \$500,000 in our emergency fund. The turnaround is happening and the population decline is leveling off and showing signs of growth, all of which is welcome news.

The Education Committees of the House and the Senate met jointly every day to review information gathered during the summer and heard testimony from the Commissioner of Education and the Department of Education. They reviewed the current status of education and the need for more resources to meet their goals for the future. The Community in Schools group presented their work and results as well. They are a non-profit group that goes into schools with a high at risk student population, and help with those children that are having difficulties due to poverty or other social issues beyond their control and no fault of the child. Some examples include need of food, clothing, eyeglasses, dental care, friendship, and counseling. This remarkable group is doing very good things and I witnessed them in action, in a school last fall.

We began studying the effects of the newly proposed, but not yet formally announced, EPA air quality regulations. If they are as onerous as the President is requesting, we in Kansas will be adversely affected. The current technology is not available to comply and the coal generators would be in jeopardy. If carbon dioxide is declared a pollutant, which it is not, each and every one of us will be affected personally by these proposed regulations.

I was privileged to hear Secretary of State, Kris Kobach, speak on our Constitution and possible ways we as a State can work to protect ourselves from Federal over reach. His talk was followed by a dynamic speaker, Ms. Kris Anne Hall, an attorney from Florida who travels the U. S. teaching the Constitution in schools, churches, or any group interested in our heritage.

We will not be in session on Monday in observance of Martin Luther King Day. One of my favorite quotes of his: "Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter." Be silent no longer. Get involved; speak up at all levels of government, to include local, school, county, state and federal. As always it is an honor and a privilege to serve you.

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