

2015 Legislative Update No. 1 from Ron Highland, Representative of the 51st District

The week began with the formal Inaugural Ball. It was a night of friendly festivities where all attending were Kansans celebrating the peaceful beginning of new terms of offices as your elected officials and Representatives. The pomp and circumstance continued on as the week progressed.

Monday was the day for swearing in of the Governor and all elected officials at 11:00 and the Representatives at 2:00. Law requires all those elected to take an oath to uphold and defend the Constitutions of the United States and of Kansas. That oath was administered by the Chief Justice of the Kansas Supreme Court. I am mindful that under oath Kansas sovereignty remains paramount in my deliberations. The Governor's ceremony included his remarks, gifts from the four Indian Nations, wonderful music, and recitation of the poem, The Spirit of Kansas Pioneers, written and delivered by Ron Wilson, Poet Lariat from the 51st District.

The work began almost immediately. The Speaker of the House of Representatives, Ray Merrick, was re-elected and he assigns all committees, office spaces, and your seat on the floor of the House. All my committee assignments have changed from my last term in office.

I was named the Chairman of the Education Committee. It is an honor and a great deal of responsibility. With the budget and court attention, the media interest is constant. That is, in turn, bringing almost daily interview requests from various media outlets. This is a new experience and my approach is to be available, courteous, and truthful. I was also assigned to the Appropriations (Budget) and Tax Committees. The result of the new assignments is meetings from early morning to five every day. The downside for me is that I now have very little time for visitors. I enjoy meeting and getting to know those who take the time to come to the Capitol.

The Education Committee is already reviewing information and entering into committee the bills that were prepared after the elections in 2014. We also heard the report from the K-12 Student Performance and Efficiency Commission that was required by law.

The Governor's State of the State address was given Thursday evening in the House Chamber. Ushering in the Supreme Court Justices was another new experience for me. The Governor's budget proposal was presented to the legislature on Friday in the Appropriations Committee. The budget is, by law, our primary duty as legislators. We represent you and take the responsibility very seriously to see that your tax dollars are spent wisely and cautiously.

Visitors to my new office location at 561 W were Judith Kramer from the Pottawatomie Wabaunsee Regional Libraries and representatives from the Emporia Chamber of Commerce.

Remember, this is your government; remain vigilant in your oversight. Thank you for your vote in my reelection and the trust it implies. You can listen in on the House or Senate proceedings each day by going to <http://www.kslegislature.org/li/>. The House convenes at 11:00 and the Senate at 2:30. This web site also has the daily calendar with a listing of the bills to be considered that day for both the House and the Senate. This is your government and your Representatives and Senators need to know how you feel about issues before them. My contact information is: 785-296-7310; Rm 561 W, State Capitol, Topeka, Kansas, 66612; and ron.highland@house.ks.gov. It is an honor and a privilege to serve you.