

## 2018 Legislative Update No. 1

Linda and I have discussed our future plans and goals at great length. I have also visited with family, friends, and supporters concerning my service as your Representative for the 51<sup>st</sup> District. In this my first Update, I am announcing that I have decided to file and run for the 2019–2020 term in the Kansas House of Representatives.

The first weeks have been hectic but void of major legislation. Most committees are having informational hearings to get background on specific topics and hearing from agencies that are required to give the legislature an annual update. We heard the Governor's State of the State address and the Chief Justice of the Kansas Supreme Court's Judiciary State address as well. Every day and evening are filled with people approaching us to either inform us on an issue of importance to them, or to ask for support for upcoming legislation. This year seems to be more active than usual with moments of influence.

The Governor essentially supports what the K-12 education cabal is asking for. Two things are troubling to me. First, one legislature cannot financially tie the hands of a following legislature. The proposal the Governor made does that by promising \$100 million more in funding over the next five years. Second, the costs associated with IEP's for every student and hiring more in the K-12 system is worrisome when looking at security for the education portion of KPERs into the future.

The Chief Justice used most of his address to beg for additional funding for the Judicial Branch of government. Although I am sympathetic to their needs, it is ironic that they would recommend increased funding for schools during difficult economic times for our state at the detriment to higher education, other agencies, and branches of government, including their own. Perhaps there is a good reason the founders did not include the Kansas Supreme Court in the appropriations process.

The Legislature is placing much focus this session on rulings by the Kansas Supreme Court. If the court rules that partial birth abortion is a right according to the Kansas Constitution, there may be a flurry of activity toward development of a Constitutional Amendment. Several ideas are being discussed as to how to address the Court's opinion on funding of K-12 education. Ideas I have heard include: a constitutional amendment, accepting the Governor's recommendations, or another tax increase. Nothing at this point has gained enough traction to be discussed in depth.

An Ag Committee tour sponsored by the Kansas Agriculture Alliance was a day well spent. Three of the tour stops were in my district. We visited the Mertz family operation, River Creek Farms, in the Zeandale area, Peddicord Land & Cattle of Wamego, and then went on to KSU to tour the Department of Agriculture, Kansas Wheat Innovation Center, KSU College of Veterinary Medicine, and finally the Mid Kansas Corporation of Manhattan. The opportunity to learn more about our state's

largest contributor to our economy was enjoyable. These events are necessary as some members of the Ag Committee were exposed to the information for the first time.

Every year since my election I have stood, along with other elected officials, on the south steps of the Capitol at the Rally for Life to be recognized as those believing life is precious and should not be destroyed. Other rallies I attended were Keep the Faith in America Rally for Religious Freedom, School Choice, Homeschool Day at the Capitol, Martin Luther King Celebration, and Kansas Day.

As stated previously, I had meetings and personal discussions with many groups already. The list includes: Kansas Soybean Association, Kansas Corporation Commission, Kansas Agriculture Alliance, Board of Regents, Keep the Faith in America Rally for Religious Freedom, Homeschooling group panel, Kansas District Magistrates, State Association of Kansas Watersheds, Association of Community Mental Health Centers of Kansas, Kansas Grain & Feed Association, Kansas Cooperative Council, students manning the KSU College of Veterinary Medicine booth during Higher Education day, Public Accountants Association of Kansas, Joint Law Enforcement, County Appraisers Association, Kansas Beer Wholesalers Association, Register of Deeds Association, Local Government, and Kansas Academy of Family Physicians, just to name a few. I have also attended meetings with Congressmen Roger Marshall and Ron Estes. At the January Riley County Republican Coffee Talk, I was their speaker.

I had the distinct pleasure of having members of the Flint Hills Regional Leadership Class shadow me for most of the day on Jan. 18. The members are Sara Blankey, Allison Karnowski, Matt Kenney, Chip Redmond, and Lucas Shivers. Also, visitors in my office were Kellen Liebsch, Kansas Agricultural Rural Leadership; Judith Cremer, Pottawatomie Wabaunsee Regional Libraries; and Don Hellwig and Ted Nighswonger, Kansas Water Authority. I was honored to be visited by Mickey and Stephanie Zimmerman and their family, Todd and Trina Steinbach and their family, and Stephanie Ulmer and her children. It is a joy to spend time with constituents who take the time to visit the Capitol with their children.

It has been my honor to represent you and keep you informed with my newsletters. At my website, [www.ronhighland.com](http://www.ronhighland.com), you can find a syllabus that explains in detail how to get the legislative information you need. My contact information is: Rm 561 W, State Capitol, Topeka, Kansas 66612; 785-296-7310, [ron.highland@house.ks.gov](mailto:ron.highland@house.ks.gov). Thank you for the privilege to serve you.