

## **2014 Legislative Update No. 10 from Ron Highland, Representative of the 51<sup>st</sup> District**

This week was the beginning of the mad dash to the end of session. Bills are being passed back and forth between the Senate and the House for final action. Only the exempt committees are still working. Next week will be devoted to debate and voting on those bills that have made it through the process to this point.

The Education Committee met to approve a Senate Concurrent Resolution, SCR 1619, supporting information technology education opportunities. SB 367 had hearings and lengthy discussions. It creates the student data privacy act. It was amended in an attempt to make it more restrictive and to add definitions of responsibility for the data. I abstained from voting for the final bill because of concerns for adequate controls and security of very sensitive data being collected on our children. The amount of data being collected and then being shared with other agencies needs to be reviewed very carefully in the future. An IT expert testified that security of the data collected is needed. The bill now has to go before the full House for consideration and I look forward to the discussions there.

The Energy and Environment Committee worked one bill dealing with the creation of a new state seismic monitoring network. We amended HB 2763 to develop the network and included language for funding the project. We live in an area that is more active than once thought and information is needed to aid prediction of future events.

The non-exempt committees finished bills they wished to be heard by Friday. The exempt committees (House Appropriations, House Taxation, Senate Assessment and Taxation, House and Senate Federal and State affairs, and the Senate Ways and Means Committees) may work until April 4 to complete their work.

The House passed House Substitute for SB 231 to reorganize the Court of Tax Appeals. This bill changes the name to Board of Tax Appeals and requires deadlines for decisions to be rendered. HB 2744 defines criteria for autism diagnosis and therapy for insurance coverage in Kansas. SB 311 raises the non-economic damages cap to \$350,000 and the bill was amended to remove the clause dealing with collateral damages. SB 308 was passed to allow cell phone numbers to be added to the no call list and will give the Attorney General authority to prosecute offenders.

We all have to be attentive as the process goes forward. We discussed the “gut and go” procedure used within the legislative process last week. “Bundling” is another procedure used during the last days of the session. If there are a few bills on the same topic, e.g. taxation, they could be bundled into one large bill and presented for a vote. Because only one bill number is used, a bill you may be following could seem to have disappeared. We each keep records of our votes on bills and when a bundled bill appears we check our voting records on the separate bills to help guide our vote on the new bundled bill. The big and complex appropriation bills are yet to come. As a legislative body, we cannot adjourn until we pass a budget. Because of the recent Kansas Supreme Court decision, this year’s budget is more complicated.

Monday through Wednesday we will be on the floor all day and into the night to finalize voting in preparation for Conference Committee work. April 4 is first adjournment or “drop dead day” when no further legislative action on bills will occur. We will return April 30 to finish all business and to consider any vetoes made by the Governor.

My visitors this week began with family, Marjorie Mayer, Marysville; Dr. Katherine Mayer, Charlotte, North Carolina; Dr. Don Mayer, Wichita; and our Grandsons, Otto and Clive. Robbin Cole, Executive Director of Pawnee Mental Health Services, Bill Persinger, Executive Director of the Mental Health Center of East Central Kansas, and Dr. Ralph Richardson, Dean of KSU College of Veterinary Medicine came to the office. I met with Jennifer Savage, Suzanne Simon, Norbert Marek, David Stuewe, Robert Boyd, Clancy Holeman, and Davis Lewis at County Government Day. Rev. Dr. Paul Barkey brought a large group of youth and parents from the Manhattan Assembly of God Church to my office. I joined with Legislators from the First District who met with Congressman Tim Huelskamp and discussed ways our state is protecting itself from the federal government’s over-reach.

As a reminder, you can listen in to the House or Senate proceedings each day by going to <http://www.kslegislature.org/li/>. 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.

It is an honor and a privilege to serve you. I can be reached by email, mail or in person at the Capitol. My office phone is 785-296-7310 and my email address is [ron.highland@house.ks.gov](mailto:ron.highland@house.ks.gov).