

Legislative Update No. 10 from Ron Highland, Representative of the 51st District

The commodity in shortest supply this week was time. All committees had to finish their work by Friday. That meant committees were meeting before the work day normally began and well past quitting time. My last committee meeting this session began at 7 am Friday morning. This last week I had numerous 5 pm committee meetings to complete the last votes on bills that could move forward to the House. There will be no more bills presented through the normal committee process.

This week, we passed the budget and tax bills. I was very impressed with the chairmen of both committees (Marc Rhodes and Richard Carlson respectively). Together, a plan was put forth that generally follows the Governor's plan of tax reduction. The plan has spending reductions and tax reductions, but they are contingent upon economic growth. As the economy grows, the taxes will be reduced, but only if the economy grows. I am generally satisfied with the bills but the Senate bill is different so a conference committee has been assigned and will meet next week.

There was other important legislation passed by the House this week. HB 2253 will not allow taxpayer dollars to be used to subsidize abortions, and the bill defines life as beginning at fertilization. HB 2037 protects the display of religious and historical artifacts on public property. I hope the Senate passes our bills as written.

Wednesday, March 27th is the last day bills can be considered in the house of origin. We have begun to hear Senate bills already this week and will continue next week as well. But, all the bills the House committees passed out this week have only three days to be presented to the whole House for debate and a vote. That means long days, and very possibly late nights to get through the long list. I have been warned to stay alert. At this late stage of the process, some will attempt to bundle bills or other legal maneuvers to get their favorite bill passed. This can result in a good bill having a stinker attached, causing a final vote to be difficult. I will keep you posted.

The last week of March and the first week of April will be interesting and rapid fire weeks as the session is scheduled to first adjourn April 5. The House will begin session at 9 am each day and run until the day's list of bills has been dealt with. If you enjoy political debate, as I do, these are your weeks. When the legislature is in session you can hear the debate live via the internet at www.kslegislature.org, or come witness it live from the gallery.

Remember, this is your government run by the people. It does not belong to federal or state agencies. Get involved and stay involved. I appreciate all the emails you have sent. Each is read and considered before I make a decision to vote.

Thank you for the honor of serving you. Please feel free to contact me at Ron.Highland@house.ks.gov or 785-296-7310.