

Legislative Update No. 11 from Ron Highland, Representative of the 51st District

This week was shorter, as all of the voting was packed into long days on Monday and Tuesday. We voted on several bills from the Senate that were either different than ours or House bills that they had amended. We generally agreed with most of the bills presented. On the bills that the committees felt were too different, we voted to nonconcur. All of the nonconcur bills went to conference committees. Conference committees are made up of the chairman, vice chairman, and the ranking minority leader on the same committees from each chamber. Those six individuals will negotiate an agreement that will be presented to each chamber for a final vote next week. If both chambers agree and pass the bill, then it will go to the Governor for signing.

Major bills in conference committees include abortion, gun rights, second amendment protection, drug testing of welfare recipients, state budget, and taxes. The differences in the budget and tax bills are not minor and will require some difficult negotiations. The tax bill the House proposed included allowing the 0.6% sales tax to sunset as planned on June 30, whereas the Senate bill continues the tax. The hope of the Governor and the rest of us is that the economy of Kansas grows quickly to offset the reduced revenues from the new tax laws passed last session. There are some encouraging signs that this is occurring.

Those present in the Capitol on Monday were treated to a noonday concert performance by the 4th, 5th, and 6th Grade angelic voices of the St George Elementary Honor Choir who filled the Capitol Rotunda with their beautiful music. Senator Longbine and I hosted the Honor Choir. I presented Director, Janet Armstead and the Honor Choir with an Official Accommodation Certificate. That afternoon many stopped me to say how beautifully their voices sounded.

Next week will be the final week of this legislative session for all bills. Following next week, we will adjourn until the veto session scheduled for May 8, 2013. I ran for the House of Representatives because I believe in limited government and a lower tax burden. I also ran because I strongly believe in individual freedom and individual responsibility. Those principles guided my thinking and voting during this session and will continue to do so.

I will be giving you, the taxpayer and stake holder in your government, a wrap up report next week. Your emails of encouragement are appreciated. Many of you have shared specific information with me that I was able to put to good use in my deliberations.

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