



2014 Legislative Update No. 11 from Ron Highland, Representative of the 51st District

The House spent the first three days of this week on the House floor debating and voting on bills in order to meet Wednesday's deadline for passing non-exempt bills out of the chamber. The next stage of the session is mainly reserved for the House and Senate to meet in conference committees. This is the process by which differences in bills are discussed and negotiated. Each chamber presents their bill and position along with what they like and don't like about the other chamber's bill. The top three members of each committee represent their respective chamber's position in the negotiations. When both sides believe they have an equitable agreement, they submit their report back to their respective chambers and each body votes on the report. If it passes both chambers, it is then submitted to the Governor for his signature or veto. If either house rejects the agreement, they go back to conference and resume the negotiation process. The conference committee process is followed for any bill which has differences from what the other chamber passed.

HB 2643 passed the House that puts into statute the guidelines of the Property Valuation Division (PVD) regarding classifying personal property. The bill also attempts a global solution to the ongoing difficulties associated with appraisal of business machinery and equipment. This bill would essentially set the default classification for the appraisal of machinery and equipment as personal property unless proven otherwise by the facts as applied by the three part PVD test. The clarifying language contained in this bill would help prevent Kansas business from paying exorbitant property taxes due to misclassification of their machinery and equipment.

HB 2553 passed after vigorous debate and would seek to petition the US Congress for full control of the state's Medicare and Medicaid dollars. Section 1, Article 10 of the U.S. Constitution gives Congress the authority to approve compacts set up between states. The Health Care Compact would ask that Congress grant Kansas autonomy over the federal healthcare money that it receives so that Kansas can make decisions about how to address the healthcare needs of its citizens rather than federal bureaucrats.

SCR 1618 passed that would put on the ballot in the next election a constitutional amendment. If adopted by the voters, the amendment would allow nonprofit organizations to use a raffle for fundraising purposes. While these groups routinely do so under current law, the practice is

actually illegal. This measure would simply install a legal process, allowing the legislature to make certain provisions to authorize licensing, conduct and regulation of any charitable raffles held by nonprofit, religious, charitable, fraternal, educational and veteran organizations. This would allow the state to regulate the raffle without violating the Kansas Constitution.

The Student Privacy Act passed the House, SB 367, which would ensure that certain student data collected by the state is kept private. SB 367 would limit what data is on a student's record, what can be disclosed, and to whom it may be disclosed. The people authorized to see the record would include parents/legal guardians, authorized personnel who need it to perform their assigned duties and public health officials. The bill would also prevent the collection of biometric data.

I am proud to say we passed two bills to honor and take care of our veterans. The goal outlined in the bill, HB 2675, is to award at least 3 percent of state contracts to veteran owned businesses. Another bill, SB 263, establishes the military funeral honor fund, to pay for the continuation of military funeral honors by the Kansas National Guard Honor Guard. The fund will have the ability to receive donations, grants, and gifts in support of the costs of providing funeral honors. The need comes as a result of federal budget cuts.

In a disappointing order on Friday, the US Fish and Wildlife Service listed the lesser prairie chicken on the threatened species list. This change in listing significantly reduces the commercial and industrial activities allowed on the land. The impacts of this ruling affect not only oil and gas production, but many other types of economic activity as well. Prior to the listing, Kansas along with four other surrounding states, who are home to the prairie chicken, developed a habitat conservation program to partner with landowners and the federal government to reverse the trending habitat loss which has resulted in depressed population numbers. Unfortunately, the federal government listed the lesser prairie chicken before the program had an opportunity to work.

It was an honor to host two return pages this week. Justin Donaldson, from Maple Hill and Louis Vopata from Paxico were a big help to the House members. I am pleased that they have developed an interest in state government along with all of their achievements. Linda and I attended the Rossville Community Foundation dinner and the 53rd Annual Kansas Prayer Breakfast in Topeka. On Saturday morning I participated with the Riley County legislative delegation in the Manhattan Legislative Town Hall Forum at the Manhattan Zoo.

April 4 is Drop dead day, or also known as first adjournment. Virtually all business should be done on that day. However, depending on the back and forth negotiations between the House and Senate this week, the school finance budget could be finished when we come back from break. We break until April 30 when veto session begins to consider any bills the Governor may have decided not to sign into law. May 15 is day 90 and the last day of session.

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.