

Legislative Update No. 12 from Ron Highland, Representative of the 51st District

The week started slowly but picked up speed as the week went along and the deadline of first adjournment on Friday approached. The entire week was devoted to waiting on bills coming out of conference committees for a final vote. When differences occur on similar legislation in both houses, a conference committee is assigned and their ultimate bill is presented back to each chamber for discussion and a vote. If both chambers agree on the new language and pass the newly worded bill, then that bill is sent to the Governor who has three choices of actions. Those are to either sign the bill into law, let it become law without his signature, or veto the bill. That is what we did the entire week, finishing at about 11 pm on Friday.

A note of caution is warranted here. The bill you thought you knew and understood may not be the same that passed in conference committee. Some bills were “gutted” and entirely new language inserted. Other bills were “bundled” making it a larger more inclusive bill. We each received a Conference Committee Report Brief (CCRB) explaining all the changes prior to debate on the floor. The budget and the tax bills have yet to leave the conference committees. We are on break until the May 8 Veto Session when we will discuss those along with a few other bills still in conference committees.

The best way to find information on bills the Governor has signed can be found at his media site (governor.ks.gov) where they are listed in the news releases. A short description of each is included. Then to read the specifics on each you must go to www.kslegislature.org to search for the bill number. You can also find out how each member voted there as well.

Several bills passed by both chambers that are either awaiting the Governor’s signature or that he has already signed include gun laws, Second Amendment protection, abortion, school finance and reporting, restraint of trade, KDOT and KTA to be headed by the Secretary of Transportation, human trafficking, stem cell research, protection of agriculture operations from nuisance activities, and children’s internet protection, just to name a few.

I was honored to introduce the Wamego Lady Raider Basketball team to the legislature and present them with a Certificate of Recognition for their achievement as State 4A Champions. Their head coach, Jim Page, and his assistants, Andy Morton and Jana Biery, accompanied them for the presentation. Not only are they a very talented group of young women, they are equally impressive individually. What a delight it was to host them on Thursday at the Capitol.

My first session in the House of Representatives so far has been an exciting learning experience. It has been very rewarding to make new friends in the 51 District and in the Statehouse. I remind myself every day that I am to represent the people of the 51st District and the rest of Kansas. I take that responsibility very seriously and will continue to do so. Thank you for the words of encouragement. I will continue to monitor my email during this break and that address is Ron.Highland@house.ks.gov. Thank you for the honor of serving you.