

2015 Legislative Update No. 14 from Ron Highland, Representative of the 51st District

The week was primarily one of hearings on bills presented to the committees. The House and Senate did take up the Governor's veto of the "Uber" bill (House Substitute for SB 117). Both houses overrode the veto with a two thirds vote as required by law. The transportation company objected to the Legislature's requirements for background checks of the drivers and the requirement for minimal insurance coverage. The Legislature felt the requirements were not unreasonable to protect the citizens of Kansas who would be utilizing their services.

The Education committee met to hear and work SB 193. The bill would have required the Kansas Regents institutions to provide any prospective student a prospectus for the degree or program they may be considering. Students would be given a one page information sheet with course requirements, tuition costs, time to graduate, average salary to expect, and projected time to pay off school loans. Final committee action was not completed at this time.

The Appropriations committee and Senate Ways and Means committee met jointly to hear experts on what would be involved in privatizing the KPERS fund activities. This is a very controversial subject and because we are only about 60% funded at the present time it is unlikely any company specializing in managing this type of effort would be inclined to bid on a contract.

The Tax committee held hearings on three bills involving tax policy. HB 2427 – Providing for a \$.05 increase in motor fuels taxes; and HB 2429 – Concerning sales and compensating tax: relating to rates. As expected, there were no proponents for either of these bills, only opponents. The third bill, SB 270 concerned tax credits for those who would give money for underprivileged to attend another school. We have yet to find a tax that is supported by those who have attended the meetings. The committee will begin in earnest next week. There is a delay because we are waiting for the Revenue Department to report the income tax receipts for 2014. Many more returns were submitted in paper form instead of electronic form this year. The reasons given were the problems that arose with the Intuit program and others. The delay was not expected. The Legislature is waiting so we have accurate income tax revenue numbers before having to go to a tax solution to make up the deficit for 2016 and 2017.

The House Committee of the Whole did pass several bills this week that will now go to the Senate for consideration. Two of note, HB 2049 – Amending penalty for first and second marijuana possession convictions; and House Substitute for SB 91 – Renewable energy standards act and property tax exemptions for renewable energy resources. HB 2049 was amended twice to add a provision for hemp oil to treat epilepsy in children and to allow hemp to be grown as an agriculture product in Kansas. The debates were lengthy and passionate. However, at this point they are in the hands of the Senate and changes are anticipated. If they survive that process they will then go to the Conference Committee before we see them again. I seriously doubt they will reappear as written.

The House did concur with four Conference Committee reports. HB 2256 was originally a realtor's bill that was gutted and replaced with SB 206 and SB 128. It became a bill to create and amend law related to the enforcement of Kansas Open Records Act (KORA) and Kansas

Open Meetings Act (KOMA). The others were Sen. Sub. for HB 2165 that had four other bills bundled with it, Sen. Sub. for HB 2149 that had two other bills bundled with it, and HB 2051.

You can read the bills and the Conference Committee Reports (CCR) in their entirety by going to the legislative web site, <http://www.kslegislature.org/li/>. If you need help navigating the site you can go to my web site, www.ronhighland.com where there is a syllabus that explains in detail how to get the information you need.

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