

## **2015 Legislative Update No. 4 from Ron Highland, Representative of the 51<sup>st</sup> District**

It is with a heavy heart that I write this week's update. My good friend Representative Dennis Hedke's wife died on Thursday. Annette was a wonderful lady, whom Linda and I will miss greatly. Rep. Hedke is a geophysicist who gives time away from his business to chair the Energy and Environment Committee. Many in his family reside in the Wamego area. The news of Annette's sudden death caused us all to reflect on the importance of our faith and family.

The House and Senate both passed the Rescission Bill that enables the state to pass the current crisis and move forward. The rest of the session will be spent working to develop a budget for the next two years. It will not be easy, but it will get done. The previous Governor had a similar situation, if you recall. It will require a closer look at every agency, department, and line item in the budget. Spending has continued to rise, even in these times of reduced revenues. We cannot spend more than we have. It sounds simple, but there are those who would rather speak of blame than work to solve the problems. I would remind them that problems are solved with ideas not finger pointing. I will not accept the failure to remedy and correct the present fiscal situation.

The Education Committee is looking carefully at ways to increase funding for the classroom and teachers. We are also looking at ways to reduce administrative costs, the fastest growing budget item in K-12 education. There was testimony by the newly hired Commissioner of Education, Dr. Randy Watkins, concerning the department's implementation of the Rose Standards that the Supreme Court addressed in their ruling and were put into place by legislation last year. There is a bill creating a commission to help fully develop and implement the new standards.

The deadline for submitting bills by a committee for consideration ends February 9. All committees will be busy with hearings and working the bills that have been presented. Those bills that a committee feels are worthy of passage will then go to the House floor. Once the Speaker moves the bills "above the line" in the House Journal, the bill is introduced, debated, and given a final vote usually the next day.

The Rotunda is always bustling with events and displays. Of note this week was a school choice rally, and a huge aviation display and luncheon for all visitors and employees in the Capitol. Receptions I attended this week were for the Kansas Economic Development Association, Kansas Association of County Government, League of Kansas Municipalities, and the Kansas Banker Association. Visitors this week were Marcus and Jeannie Merritt, Wamego; Randy Kufahl, Kristy Umscheid, and Jim Moore from the Farmers State Bank in Westmoreland; and Lynn Mayer from Citizens State Bank in Marysville. Lynn is on the board of the Kansas Bankers Association and is also my brother-in-law.

My contact information is: 785-296-7310; Rm 561 W, State Capitol, Topeka, Kansas, 66612; and [ron.highland@house.ks.gov](mailto:ron.highland@house.ks.gov). It is an honor and a privilege to serve you.