

## **2015 Legislative Update No. 7 from Ron Highland, Representative of the 51<sup>st</sup> District**

February 27 was “turn around day” for the legislature. That is the last day bills from non-exempt committees can be considered by the House or Senate. The bills that pass each chamber are then “turned around” and sent to the other chamber committees for consideration. Each committee then decides if the assigned bills are passed on to their chamber for final votes. The process is deliberative and some bills sent over will never be considered because the Senate or House committees may decide it is not in the interest of our State to have them become law. This process allows more time for individuals to review the proposed legislation. It also allows the taxpayer more time to let their Representatives know how they feel about bills as well.

The Education Committee held two big hearings this week, HB 2292 – the common core curriculum bill, and HB 2193 – the in-state tuition for undocumented students bill. Both hearings had over flow audiences and many people gave testimonies as either proponent or opponent. Written testimonies were also numerous as evidenced by the 61 written proponents and 21 written opponents for HB 2292. Passions ran high but all in attendance conducted themselves professionally and respectfully. Neither bill was considered for final vote in committee this week. Those meetings are yet to come.

The Appropriations and Tax Committees continued looking at proposed budgets and reviewing items such as existing tax credit programs. Both of these committees will get very busy once the final budget proposal is released that covers the education portion of the budget. The K-12 and Regent’s budgets represent more than 60% of the State budget and will receive the greatest attention, dictated by the portion of the budget they represent. Kansas ranks fourth in the nation in the amount of dollars, relative to their total budget, spent on education.

The bills passed by the House this week were mostly revising, amending, or repealing existing laws to update or clarify language. Because of “turn around” we were on the House floor debating and voting on bills all day Wednesday and Thursday. In all thirty eight bills were passed. You can go to the legislative website, <http://www.kslegislature.org/li/>, and under “Journals” for each day find the list of bills passed and how the votes were recorded. But, please remember the bills must go to the Senate before they become a bill for the Governor to sign. There is still a long way to go before a bill becomes law.

HB 2154 and HB 2228 that passed may be of interest to follow. The first, HB 2154, encourages employers to give veterans preference in employment decisions, and the second, HB 2228, changes Kansas law to conform to the Federal law giving veterans in-state tuition at our colleges and universities. HB 2326 is the teacher’s negotiations bill that was amended on the floor. It limits the scope of allowable negotiable items in their contracts. HB 2115 is the DUI law update that stiffens the consideration of previous DUI convictions when an accident occurs. The result will be longer prison time for the offender. This bill passed unanimously.

There was another education rally on common core in the Rotunda this week. I attended a meeting with the Kansas Independent Colleges and Universities. According to their data, they represent 12% of the enrollment in Kansas schools of higher education. They graduate 20% of the total Bachelor’s

Degrees and 24% of the total Master's Degrees (2012 – 2013). Their report contained cost and years to degree comparisons that also were interesting. The report can be found at their web site, [www.kscolleges.org](http://www.kscolleges.org) under the Legislative heading, titled "The 2015 KICA Legislative Fact Book."

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.