

## **Happy July 4<sup>th</sup> and the Beginning of Your Summer, Legislative Update No. 8, June 2018**

I wish you an enjoyable summer and July 4<sup>th</sup> celebration. Though the regular legislative session has ended, my summer and fall will be busy with campaigning along with continuing to have regular meetings in Topeka. For me, being in the legislature has been a full-time job. As vice-chair of the Joint Administrative Rules and Regulations Committee, we will be meeting several times to evaluate new rules and regulations put forth by the many state agencies. I have also been assigned as a member of an interim committee to study the impact upon our state of the recent U.S. Supreme Court ruling on allowing states to legalize sports gambling.

The 2018 Legislative session is over. Members of the House introduced 799 bills for consideration by committees. The Senate members introduced 462 bills. Of that total of 1261 bills introduced, 191 made it to the Governor for signature. Only 15% of the bills considered made it through the entire process. A great deal of time is spent hearing, debating, and eventually voting on bills. Many of those bills lacked merit and quite frankly should never have been considered. The session is short, and time is precious. Our time, in my opinion, would be better spent researching and debating those topics that affect our constituents and the state as a whole. Not every problem brought to the legislature needs a law to solve it.

Major legislation passed in the last eight days included: HB 2028 – the Telemedicine Bill that allows reimbursement for services provided by telemedicine, my vote was yes; SB 284 – the Adoption Protection Bill giving the faith-based adoption service providers reasonable protections to continue providing the services they are currently doing, my vote was yes; HB 2539 – amends statutes concerning requirements to run for statewide offices, making 25 years of age the minimum to run for Governor and Lt. Governor, and that candidates for Attorney General must be licensed to practice in Kansas, my vote was yes; SB 109 – the Omnibus bill that underwent several changes in content and bill numbers on the next to last day of the session, my vote was yes; and Sub, for SB 61 – The school finance trailer bill to correct the error found when the original school finance bill was passed, my vote was no;

HB 2228 - the “mega” tax bill passed the Senate the morning of the last day. The bill arrived in the House for debate and failed by a vote of 59-59. I voted yes because the bill would have increased deductions by itemizing even if you do not itemize on the Federal return. The bill would have also accelerated the deduction amounts allowed for medical expenses, mortgage interest and property taxes paid. In short, it would have returned to Kansans the “windfall” in state income tax received from the federal income tax decreases.

HB 2280 – the Rules and Regulations bill requires any agency or department writing rules and regulations must complete an economic impact study before moving forward. Rules and regulations are written after legislation becomes law and have the same effect as law. We wanted more transparency on the process and to show the public and businesses what affect the new rules will have on them from a monetary standpoint. I and several others worked on this bill for over two years, and I obviously voted yes. At the bill signing where I represented the legislature, the Governor made the statement, “This may be the most important bill I have signed this year.” It gives some accountability where there was very minimal oversight.

SB 449 – requires the Department of Commerce to have a database, which would disclose information on certain economic development incentive programs and be searchable by the public. This is critical considering all the funds that are distributed under the heading of economic development. The public has a right to know where the money is going and the right to ask if the incentives are paying off for the state; and if not, that money could be better utilized in other programs. My vote was yes.

My schedule has been full of events at the close of session and ever since. Some of the highlights were spending the morning with the Financial Scholars Essay Contest winners. I am proud to announce that Elise Artzer from Wamego High School was the second-place winner, receiving a \$2000 scholarship. I attended the bill signing at KSU for the higher ed budget increase, which I supported. On Memorial Day in Wamego I was humbled to be asked to speak.

U S Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue toured the Manhattan area and I enjoyed a visit with him. As Veterinarians we both have had careers advocating for agriculture. I attended the June KSU Veterinary Conference. Recently, I have filmed two TV shows to speak on the Ag economy and debt in Kansas. Also Ag related, is the need for a new Belvue bridge. I hosted a meeting at our home to bringing together both Pottawatomie and Wabaunsee County officials with KDOT officials and local Ag businessmen to discuss the possibility of applying for the new federal BUILD grant for county infrastructure. The annual Team Kansas Business awards this year included Liquid Art Winery & Estate, Manhattan, as one of the finalists. I enjoy supporting this business event every year.

The Wamego community, with big support from Caterpillar and leadership from Chris Shearer of Caterpillar, brought The Wall That Heals to Kansas. This event was a huge success and I was again humbled to be asked to speak at the opening ceremony.

Looking ahead to October 8, I would like to invite you to come to Topeka for my annual Columbus Day at the Capitol event. I have reserved the House of Representatives Chamber and Old Supreme Courtroom for that day. This event will include more attractions this year along with giving you the opportunity to sit in the Representative's seats and partake in a mock legislative session day. More information will be coming and since the House seats 125, attendees will be limited to that number.

Have a great summer!

It is my honor to represent you and keep you informed with my newsletters. At my website, [www.ronhighland.com](http://www.ronhighland.com), you can find more information, to include all my previous newsletters and other topics that I have extensively researched. Soon I will post documents that I have prepared on debt and the ag economy. My contact information is: Rm 561 W, State Capitol, Topeka, Kansas 66612; [ron.highland@house.ks.gov](mailto:ron.highland@house.ks.gov). I look forward to hearing from you.