

## **Legislative Update No. 8 from Ron Highland, Representative of the 51<sup>st</sup> District**

This week has been like spring break since Monday and Tuesday were days off for the Legislature. However, everyone was reviewing materials on those days in preparation for the rest of the session. The rest of the week was spent on hearings on the few remaining bills, passing them out of committee, voting some down and others simply tabled. The tabled bills are technically still “alive” until the end of the 2014 session.

One bill of interest that the whole House passed was HB 2319. This bill would allow any school board of education to apply to the State Board of Education for authority to operate as a public Innovative School District. An Innovative School District would be exempt from most rules and regulations currently applied to them. This bill was supported by several public school districts currently under innovative wavers. The districts will be able to educate their students the way the parents, teachers, and school board deem best.

Last Sunday I attended the Constitution Bee in Manhattan where eighteen state finalists competed for scholarships of \$3,500, \$1,500, and \$750. What an inspiration to watch high school students from across the state gain a deeper understanding of the Constitution. Last Friday the House passed a bill setting aside a week in September as Liberty Week in the schools to promote patriotism and study the Constitution.

Kayla Oney, St. George; Abbey Amick, Alma; and Julie Roller, Wamego came to visit and educate me about their Power Up organization. It is an organization of young people 21–29 years of age who are rural by choice. Their goal is to create a network of people who live and work in small towns and rural communities. They inspired me to want join, but then disappointed me with my age disqualification. We also live rural by choice.

Cheyenne George, Administrator of Valley Vista Good Samaritan Society in Wamego visited and informed me of the great work they are doing. Linda and I were guests at the Flint Hills Rancher’s meeting and met some avid supporters of our beautiful Flint Hills. We also attended the Wabaunsee County Economic Development annual meeting in historic Paxico. Linda is a district board member and I often hear her promoting tourism and the region to others at the Capitol.

The break is officially over and the increased volume of work begins next week. Not only will we be cleaning up the straggler bills, but we will also begin reviewing the bills sent over by the Senate. The heavy lifting starts with the consideration of the budget and tax bills. I am sure the differences between the House, Senate, and the Governor’s plans on these will cause a great deal of debate and eventual compromise.

I appreciate hearing from everyone. Your comments, encouragement, and support mean a great deal to me. I regret not being able to get out and about more now, but look forward to doing so once the session ends. I thank you for the honor of serving you. Please feel free to contact me at [Ron.Highland@house.ks.gov](mailto:Ron.Highland@house.ks.gov) or 785-296-7310.