

The most important happening for me last week was the birth of our first granddaughter.

Except for the exempt committees of Tax, Appropriations, and Federal and State Affairs, all the other committees have essentially finished their work. All the bills from both chambers have been heard and worked or laid aside. Those laid aside may still be considered next year along with any new bills. The full committee of the House and Senate will work the remaining bills passed out by committees during next week. At week's end, there will be no more hearings or working of bills, with very rare exceptions, such as tax and appropriations bills. I fully expect this to happen this year, delaying the end of our session. As Vice Chair of Fed and State Affairs Committee, one of my responsibilities is writing bill briefs on all bills that pass out of committee. That is taking up much of my time right now.

The rescission bill (HB 2052) passed by the House and amended by the Senate is now in conference committee. The result is that three members of the House and three members of the Senate were assigned to the conference committee, and have been meeting to iron out the differences. The negative of conference committee action is that we, the other legislators, do not have input into the discussions. We do have the final vote on their decisions. I expect that a final vote on the rescission bill will take place early next week. Once the rescission bill is approved, the funding for the rest of this fiscal year will be final. After that, the all-important Tax, Appropriations (budget), and School Finance bills will take center stage.

The school finance formula is being heard now and will soon be passed out or voted down in committee. The current formula being discussed essentially goes back to the old formula, with some changes, and has an additional \$75 million price tag that escalates in each of the upcoming years. The details are in a 114-page draft (HB 2410). I fully expect changes to occur before and after it leaves the committee. The education lobbyists were persuasive, and many of the committee members are choosing to not take a fresh approach to developing a funding formula. Documents detailing fiscal impact to each district and explanations were also released by the Kansas Department of Education: <http://www.ksde.org/Agency/Fiscal-and-Administrative-Services/School-Finance/Whats-New>

#### Federal and State Affairs Committee:

We held hearings on two important bills this week. The first was HB 2307 – Withholding life-sustaining treatment from patients under 18 years of age. This is more commonly called “Simon’s Law” and was brought forward by the parents of a new born that was denied treatment due to birth defects, without the consent of the parents. The testimony was difficult to hear, as many are in this committee. I cannot understand why a physician would not honor the wishes of parents, and wonder why the Board of Healing Arts has not addressed this issue. The Senate had the same bill and passed it out. We will look at their final version as we work HB 2307 on Monday.

The other bill, HB 2389 – Amendments to the Kansas Amusement Ride Act, had hearings on Thursday and Friday. My intern, Mary Sabatini, and I helped develop the structure of this bill following our findings concerning existing laws in Kansas protecting the public who frequent amusement parks and carnivals. The child who was killed last year in Kansas City was the son of a colleague in the Legislature, and that tragic incident led to updating our legislation. The testimony was primarily technical in nature including that of an engineer from California, who works with Disney and gave recommendations on what should be included in legislation. We are confident that a final bill will be ready for presenting to the full House for consideration by the end of the week.

The Federal and State Affairs committee will meet early each morning before we go to the floor every day of next week to finalize our work on bills of importance, to include the two listed above. The plan is to meet on

the floor of the House all day, every day this week to finish voting on all the bills that have been selected by leadership.

Many ask me where to get information. That, as it turns out, is a difficult question to answer. I read all sides of the issues we face before making any decision. I also have an advantage, in that I can request information from the research department, visit with the state attorneys, and if necessary contact the different agencies. The Speaker's office is now publishing a weekly document that details the week's activities. The document is called the Ad Astra Review and I will put those on my web site for those of you desiring to read them. Many legislators are reading a new web site, <https://www.kansastruthcaucus.org/>, that gives information on current issues. I also read the writings of Bob Weeks, <https://wichitaliberty.org/>, because his information is always filled with references.

I am getting contacted by many concerning the writings by Duane Goossen on taxes and revenue. I would caution everyone. He was the budget director under Governors Graves, Sebelius, and Parkinson. It was during his tenure that the SEC admonished the state. The SEC found that KPERS was in terrible financial condition compared to other states, and Kansas did not adequately disclose that situation to potential bond buyers. That violated the Securities Act. In 2011 Kansas finally implemented reforms to the SEC's satisfaction. Because of those findings, we have been paying more into the KPERS system each year, and are still dealing with the ramifications. For more detailed information, you can review the documentation at the following web sites: <https://wichitaliberty.org/kansas-government/goossen-lefts-favorite-expert-kansas-admonished-securities-exchange-commission/> , <http://watchdog.org/164468/sec-fraud-parkinson/> , and <https://www.sec.gov/news/press-release/2014-164> . I hope this helps.



Congratulations to Craig and Colleen Lord, owners of Toto's Tacoz, who were given a Kansas Small Business Award. Linda and I enjoyed being present for the award ceremony event at the Capitol for our former Wamego neighbors. Additional highlights were Clergy Appreciation Day, and the Flint Hills Tallgrass Ranchers Dinner. I was honored to have Hannah and Natalie Denton from Emporia shadow me. This was their second trip to the Capitol, as we first met when they attended my Columbus Day at the Capitol event. Linda led a tour in Wabaunsee County for the Legislative Spouses organization.



At my website, [www.ronhighland.com](http://www.ronhighland.com), you can find a syllabus that explains in detail how to get the legislative information you need. I am also placing on the web site information I have gathered in the last year. My contact information is: Rm 561 W, State Capitol, Topeka, Kansas, 66612; [ron.highland@house.ks.gov](mailto:ron.highland@house.ks.gov), and [785-296-7310](tel:785-296-7310). It is an honor and a privilege to serve you.