

Legislative Update No. 9 from Ron Highland, Representative of the 51st District

Congratulations to the Wamego Lady Raiders Basketball Team. Becoming state champions is no small feat. Our children and our schools are of great importance to me. The Speaker of the House knew this and assigned me to the Education Committee. In this committee we discuss all aspects of our state's handling of this most important function. The child, the parents, and the teacher are, for me, the critical components of the discussions. My arguments and reasoning always come from that central viewpoint. If we are to improve on our system, the parents have to be more involved, and our good teachers rewarded for the work they do. Our children must be challenged and prepared to compete for their future endeavors. Competition is necessary. What I have been told by Kansas university presidents is that a high percentage of our Kansas high school graduates today are in need of remediation before going on into college classwork. We learn our strengths and weaknesses through competition, and with good teaching, coaching, and parent involvement students are better prepared. Just ask the basketball team if they would have been successful if they had not been challenged and encouraged to do their best.

One of our discussions in Education Committee has been the newest federal plan for education, Common Core Standards. Textbooks, digital media, and curricula will align to the internationally benchmarked standards, and assessments will measure student performance against the Common Core. HB 2289 would prohibit the use of Common Core Standards, an agreement made by Governor Mark Parkinson with The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and The National Governors Association (NGA) Center for Best Practices. Many states are taking a serious look into Common Core. Some states have withdrawn. What I have read and heard so far concerns me. Why are we giving up our state obligation to educate Kansas youth to a National Valuation Committee, CCSSO, and NGA Center without knowing all of the ramifications? Did we not learn our lesson with No Child Left Behind? What ever happened to Kansas led standards for students to achieve their best and become their best in our society?

The big news of the week was the announcement that both the Appropriations Committee and the Tax Committee passed out their bills on the budget and tax plan. The provisions in both these bills are controversial and differ from the Governor's plan in some areas. The result will be long days of debate before passage by the whole House. The differences between bills from the Senate and House will be worked out by Conference Committee before we are finished this session. The same applies to all the bills we have passed so far.

We also passed three bills dealing with gun ownership, self-protection, and conceal and carry. One bill known generally as the Second Amendment Protection Act was passed with a large majority. This was our message to the Federal Government, that we as Kansans have our rights and we intend to protect them.

I had the pleasure of hosting Tatum Bedore from Wamego Middle School as Page this week. I want to thank Suzanne Simon, Register of Deeds for Wabaunsee County, Kathy Michaelis and Andy Buck from the Farm Bureau Masters Program, and Larry Tawney and Darrel Wilson for their office visits. We attended a meeting held by the Contractor's Association and visited with

representatives from Midwest Concrete Materials and Bayer Construction. Once again I heard how the EPA is hindering our businesses from doing their jobs and increasing expenditures while trying to meet the ever changing regulations.

Remember, this is your government run by the people. It does not belong to federal agencies. This is the time of year when we all especially need to become involved in the process. I am only one vote, but there are 165 of your elected Kansas Senators and Representatives at the Capitol doing your work, so contact us. Contact information can easily be found at www.kslegislative.org.

I thank you for the honor of serving you. Please feel free to contact me at Ron.Highland@house.ks.gov or 785-296-7310.