

## **Legislative Update – May 2022**

I am humbled by your support throughout the last five election cycles. This year will mark ten years serving as your Representative. Linda and I have had many discussions about our future and other ways to serve our community. We have decided to retire from service in the legislature and I will not seek re-election. It has been a very rewarding experience and getting to know many of you on a personal basis will be one of the true highlights of my legislative career.

During my ten years in the House of Representatives, I have served as Chairman of the Water, Ag, Education, Joint Administrative Rules and Regulations Committees, the 2022 Joint Water Interim Study Committee, and the 2015 Joint K-12 Student Success Interim Study Committee. As Vice Chairman, I served on the Federal and State Affairs Committee, the Joint Administrative Rules and Regulations Committee, and the 2015 All Day Kindergarten Study Committee. I have also served as a member on the Agriculture, Appropriations, Commerce Labor and Economic Development, Education, Education Budget, Energy and Environment, Rural Revitalization, Taxation, and Transportation Committees. I Chaired the Kansas Legislative Exchange and Research (KLEAR) Council in 2021 and 2022 and served on the Board of Directors of the Midwest Energy Council in 2014 and 2015.

Learning and solving problems energizes me and gives me pleasure as I work to correct situations that cause harm or could better lives. With each of my committee assignments there have always been issues that stand out that could use some work. My former career in research and development prepared me to enjoy working closely with other legislators, state agencies, and the Revisor and Research Departments at the Statehouse. Major legislation always involves a team effort working together during and outside of session.

Major legislation often is done as a committee bill and it is usually a long arduous process, often spanning years of work. A prime example is the two years I have spent on the Act Concerning Water and Environment of Kansas, and I predict, this legislation will be improved and soon pass the future legislature because there is a critical need. I will be attending the Kansas and Colorado Water Compact meetings and holding an interim study committee this August to investigate groundwater issues. The work on water will continue.

While serving as Chair of the Agriculture Committee, I led the effort to bring state agencies together to pass the nation's first state comprehensive commercial hemp legislation. This also encompassed working with US Department of Agriculture Secretary, Sonny Perdue, to align our legislation with federal rules. I look forward to the future when commercial hemp is a viable crop as it once was for Kansas.

The K 99 improvement project began with asking for joint House and Senate Transportation Committees to get together for breakfasts over a two-year period to present the need for the Wamego area to have the section of K 99 between I 70 and

Wamego widened and straightened. With the help of the committee chairs pushing for the change and the committee members agreeing, the next step was a push by then Governor Jeff Colyer, and the project became high on the KDOT project list. Growth in communities follows good infrastructure.

The Belvue Bridge was something that I became involved with by hosting a meeting at our home to bring two counties together with KDOT officials and public members to discuss the issue. Over the years I have written letters of support for federal applications and have asked our US Congressmen to do the same.

I became very concerned about vehicles passing stopped school buses and worked for several years with committee bills to increase fines and asked for cameras to be installed on school buses. While chairing the Education Committee, I worked with then Kansas Treasurer, Ron Estes, to create school funding following the child by way of the Treasurer's office. In a small way this is beginning after passage of legislation this session. I also worked on Tax Credit Scholarship legislation.

Sometimes ideas brought as legislation have not been raised to the level of concern to pass through the legislature. Some of the bills listed below fall into that category. I hope to see future legislatures trust the research work of KSU Ag Economists and pass the legislation that the eight-year simple average when determining values of agriculture land for taxation is the best method. Kansas state employees should have a choice of a thrift savings plan. It would be good for employees and good for the State as KPERS remains underfunded. I feel legislators should not be in KPERS because it is a conflict. Instead, it would be better for them to be salaried.

Legislation that I sponsored or cosponsored included 32 bills over the ten years of my tenure. In 2021 – 2022 these are the bills I sponsored:

HB2004 - Creating the right to appeal an involuntary discharge or transfer from an adult residential care facility. Being studied. Not passed.

HB2005 - Excluding hot water supply boilers that have a nominal water capacity not exceeding 120 gallons from the provisions of the boiler safety act; creating the elevator safety act to require safety standards, permit requirements, and insurance coverage for elevator contractors; requiring inspections of elevators and licensure for persons installing, repairing and inspecting elevators; creating an elevator safety advisory board; establishing duties for the state fire marshal. Passed.

HB2023 - Changing to an eight-year simple average when determining values of agricultural land for purposes of property taxation. Blocked.

HB2042 - Enacting the Kansas thrift savings plan act. Blocked.

HB2043 - Ending legislator participation in KPERS and establishing an annual salary structure for legislators. Blocked.

HB2044 - Increasing KPERS employee contribution rate for school district employees and making appropriations for FY 2022 for the department of education for a pay increase for KPERS covered school district employees. Blocked.

HB2331 - Providing for the limited transfer of landowner or tenant deer hunting permits to nonresidents. Pending.

HB2456 - Establishing the Kansas kids lifetime combination hunting and fishing license. Passed.

HB2523 - Concerning the state board of veterinary examiners and the regulation of licensed veterinarians and registered veterinarian technicians; penalties; fees; investigative and disciplinary proceedings. Passed.

HB2532 - Concerning the state board of veterinary examiners and the regulation of licensed veterinarians and registered veterinarian technicians; relating to penalties, fees and investigative and disciplinary proceedings. Passed.

HB2540 - Authorizing the construction of a memorial honoring Kansas gold star families. Passed.

HB2609 - Allowing restricted driver's license holders to drive to and from worship services for any religious organizations at age 15. Passed.

Transparency, educating on the political process, and including constituents in the journey Linda and I shared was important to both of us.

What began as an effort to save my committee assistant endless hours copying testimonies and other committee documents, led to a change in transparency for the whole legislature when I was the first committee chair to run my committee entirely digital. This in turn, made all the documents available to the public, whereas before you had to be at the Statehouse to get the testimony documents. Working with IT at the Capitol we also set a system in place for committee member's documents to be digital.

Linda joined the Legislative Spouses and learned from their speakers and tours and joined in their charity work. Numerous times she brought the group to tour in District 51, when she became vice chair the last four years, responsible for leading tours.

Mentoring was an enjoyable time for us both. Linda and I shared the day with many young people and groups of folks who shadowed me. We brought groups to be involved in events, like when the St George Elementary Honor Choir sang at the dedication of the Capitol. Our Kansas Capitol is the most beautiful Capitol in the nation we think, and we wanted to encourage people to enjoy the Capitol and learn about the legislative process at the same event. This led to our Columbus Day at the Capitol series of events where I taught about the legislative process, we toured the Capitol, and then all had lunch together. Our Grandsons, Clive and Otto, spent much time with us at the Capitol when they were just little.

Oh the memories we have after ten years of serving you! Thank you for trusting in us and we ask God's blessing upon each of you and upon your families.

With kind regards,  
Ron