

“ THE PECK PERSPECTIVE ”

(From the Capitol)

April 15, 2024

Famed baseball player and manager Yogi Berra is credited with coining the phrase, "It's like déjà vu all over again." As we near the end of the 2024 session, Kansas' "middle of the road" Governor is probably just getting her veto pen warmed up – with more expected over the next couple of weeks. Every year during my four sessions as a Senator, I must write about an excessive number of good bills vetoed by Governor Kelly. However, since 2024 is an election year, some legislators who previously opposed override attempts may be more willing than before. Not a good reason to change one's voting pattern, but it happens.

As I write this, there's been six gubernatorial vetoes. To override a veto, it takes 27 votes in the Senate and 84 in the House. You will note by the vote count below that many of the recent vetoes face a strong possibility of being overridden. The first vetoed bill, SB 233, is one we've seen several times in the past, but due to a small change it may finally get past the Governor's veto.

Protecting Children (SB 233): SB 233 protects minors (17 and under) from mutilation by health care providers. We live in a time where adults have refused to tell children that there are certain life-altering decisions we will not allow them to make. So, in a continuing effort to protect children, the legislature passed SB 233, thereby preventing some misguided medical personnel from treating boys, who say they are a girl, or girls, who claim to be a boy, with puberty blockers, hormone treatment or performing surgery that is supposed to "change their gender".

Common sense, and science, tells us that life-altering chemical hormone suppression or the surgical removal of a young boy's or young girl's body parts are not "healthcare," let alone "gender-affirming healthcare." Calling it healthcare is a tragically false narrative imposed upon us by the extremists on the left. It is wrong and misleading. Not to mention permanently damaging to young bodies.

I was impressed by a message given from Pope Francis last month during his opening address at an international Symposium held in the Vatican. The Pope spoke out against gender theory describing it as an "**ugly ideology of our time**", because it erases all distinctions between men and women (emphasis added). Pope Francis went on to say that to cancel this difference "is to erase humanity. Man and woman, instead, exist in a fruitful 'tension'".

SB 233 is very similar to legislation passed in 24 other states. The vote in Kansas was 27–13 in the Senate and 82–39 by the House. I voted yes.

Allowing Sugaring (SB 434): SB 434 would exempt a popular ancient Egyptian form of hair removal, called "sugaring" from the definition of cosmetology. Sugaring

is defined in the bill as temporary hair removal “by using a paste made from sugar, lemon, and water, or its equivalent, to pull hair from follicles”. Amazingly, especially considering her veto of SB 233, Governor Kelly’s veto message reads, “*I have serious concerns that deregulating sugaring — a hair removal technique that may be performed on minors — could lead to safety and sanitation problems. We have a responsibility to protect Kansans — and this deregulation would threaten the health and safety of Kansans — particularly our children*”. REALLY? It’s okay to perform mutilation surgeries on children, but it’s harmful to remove hair with natural ingredients like sugar, lemon, and water? Senate voted 38–1 and the House 72–52.

Making the Legislature Responsible (HB 2648): The bill gives the legislature mandatory oversight of rules and regulations by state agencies, if compliance is projected to cost businesses, individuals, or local governments more than \$1 million in the first five years. The vote was: Senate 27–13 and House 82–36. I voted yes.

Why an Abortion? (HB 2049): HB 2049 requires abortion providers to ask pregnant women to pick one of 11 reasons for why they’re considering an abortion. However, there is no requirement for the woman to give an answer. The choices are: interferes with education or career; cannot provide for child; already too many children; pregnancy is the result of rape; pregnancy is the result of incest; to protect physical health; to protect emotional health; the baby’s father is pushing for the abortion; the baby’s father is abusive to them or current children; the child would have a disability; or not sufficient support from family or others to raise a child. HB 2049 passed the Senate 27–13 and the House 81–39. I voted yes.

Protecting Women From Coercion (HB 2436): HB 2436 creates the crime of coercion to obtain an abortion. The crime would be defined as engaging in coercion with the knowledge a woman is pregnant, and the woman has expressed her desire to not obtain an abortion. Violation of the law would be classified as a non-grid person felony with a sentence of between 30 days and 1 year imprisonment and a fine of \$500 to \$5,000. The penalty would be increased to between 90 days and 1 year imprisonment and a fine of between \$1,000 and \$10,000, if the pregnant mother is under the age of 18 and the unborn child’s father is 18 years of age or older. The vote was 27– 11 by the Senate and in the House 82–37. I voted yes.

Regulating “Auxiliary Containers” (HB 2446): HB 2446 would prohibit municipalities from adopting or enforcing an ordinance that prohibits, restricts, or taxes the use of auxiliary containers — like a straw, bag, cup, bottle, etc. made from cloth, paper, plastic, foamed plastic, cardboard, aluminum, or glass. This veto is not likely to be overridden as the vote was, Senate 24–16 and House 72–51. I voted yes.

Until next time, may the blessings of God be yours.

Virgil Peck
State Senator