

# ***“ THE PECK PERSPECTIVE ”***

(From the Capitol)

April 23, 2022

It was a real pleasure to spend three days traveling Senate District 15 during the April recess visiting with constituents and listening to their thoughts and concerns. I've long believed in the importance of investing time learning (or being reminded) what issues Kansans would like to see their legislature work on and what issues they have little interest in.

In last week's *Perspective* I wrote about seven bills vetoed by Governor Kelly. During the listening tour, I again mentioned them. It was apparent from those who attended, that there is wide-spread consensus on overriding most of the vetoes. Some garnered more attention or discussion than others, and a couple rose to the top as a priority; SB 160 and HB 2448.

SB 160 is the Fairness in Women's Sports Act – stopping males, who say they're females, from participating in girls' athletics and out of girls' locker rooms and showers. HB 2448 would provide real help to able-bodied adults, age 18-49, with no dependents, by requiring them to work 30 hours a week or take job training in order to receive food assistance (food stamps).

This week will reveal whether there are sufficient votes, 27 in the Senate and 84 in the House, to accomplish any overrides. I'm confident the Senate will have the votes for some overrides, but don't share the same belief for the House.

As the Legislature returns to Topeka, much has already been “accomplished” – some good and some not so good – but there are still unresolved issues needing legislative attention. In addition to considering veto overrides, we need to pass a bill to provide for K-12 funding and decide what tax savings to give to taxpayers. The two tax bills ready for action are HB 2597 and HB 2106. HB 2597 contains several provisions, personal and business, including eliminating the state income tax on retirement income. HB 2106 deals with the percentage of sales tax on groceries.

I mentioned both of these bills during the recent listening tour with the expectation that there would be universal support for reduction or elimination of the grocery tax – such was not the case. Although a significant majority of attendees support lowering the tax, there were some who prefer cutting other taxes. We will soon know the decision of the Legislature.

Other topics likely to be considered are increased spending as recommended by the Governor, providing additional election security, expanding gambling,

putting an additional \$1 billion into the KPERS fund and protections from government mandates and/or restrictions on COVID treatments.

**Reducing Health Care Costs (HB 2279):** Legislation recently signed into law, HB 2279, will allow Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRNs), persons with post-graduate education and training in nursing, to practice in the state without a collaborative practicing agreement with a licensed physician. This will help to lower costs for patients/consumers, maintain a high level of care and make healthcare more accessible by allowing APRNs to continue working under their current scope of practice.

**Restrictions For On-farm Sale of Milk (SB 346):** Some legislation that passes and becomes law can cause a person to scratch their head and say “Huh”? I’ve always lived in rural Kansas and feel that too many times urban people don’t understand we do just fine without government intrusion or intervention. Such is the case with SB 346.

The bill “allows” for the on-farm sale of milk and milk products and regulates the labeling and advertising of such products. SB 346 also extends the sunset date for milk and dairy license fees and allows the Secretary of Agriculture to declare a health hazard and assess a penalty for certain violations. As a kid and young adult, we bought milk from the neighbor who had a dairy herd – no label needed, we knew it was milk. And we saw no need for government “protections” from the neighbor. SB 246 passed the Senate 27–12. I voted no.

**Kansas Has an Official State Fruit (HB 2644):** HB 2644 was originally the idea of 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade students at Sabetha Elementary. The students learned about the legislative process – how to craft and present a bill and then testify in front of a legislative committee. They started by identifying four native fruits in Kansas and then selected which to support as the state fruit. You know the four fruits? I didn’t - I’ll tell you a little later.

Sabetha school reached out to other schools and it became a learning experience for 24 other schools representing more than 400 students. Of course, there was not 100% agreement among the students as to which fruit to present as their nomination for the state fruit, but ultimately, the majority decided on the Sandhill Plum. HB 2644 declares the Sandhill Plum as the official Kansas fruit as it was signed into law on April 12<sup>th</sup>.

The other three fruits? American persimmon, gooseberry and red mulberry.

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

Virgil Peck  
State Senator