

THE PECK PERSPECTIVE

(From the Capitol)

January 20, 2025

The 2025 Senate started at 2:00 p.m. on January 13th when Kansas Secretary of State, Scott Schwab, lifted the gavel and struck the rostrum three times. Of the 40 State Senators sworn in, 14 are new faces – 13 republicans and one democrat. Despite Governor Kelly's "Middle of the Road" political action committee (PAC) raising and spending over \$2 million to defeat conservatives, both chambers saw an increase in their republican majorities. The Senate now consists of 31 republicans (up by 2 from last session) to 9 democrats and the House is 88 republicans (up by 3) to 37 democrats. As citizens of Kansas and the United States we are truly blessed to have a republican form of government, accomplished through the democratic process.

Senate President Ty Masterson nailed it during the republican response to the Governor's State of the State speech when he said he wanted *"to thank YOU, the Kansas people, for not only re-electing, but expanding the conservative voices in the legislature"*. President Masterson went on to say *"YOUR message was delivered loud and clear. You expect us (the Legislature) to put Kansans first, control the overreach of government, and keep our promises – and that is exactly what we intend to do"*.

Results of the November 2024 elections not only brought change to the makeup of 2025 Legislature, but also for me and Senate District 15 – the district I am truly honored to represent. The district is now five whole counties: Chautauqua, Elk, Labette, Montgomery and Neosho. For me, in addition to continuing as Chairman of the Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee and Vice-Chairman of the Assessment and Taxation Committee, I now serve on the Ways and Means Committee and Utilities Committee. Additionally, I received an improved office assignment, 234-E. Although the office location changed, my phone number remains 785-296-7742. I extend an invitation to all Kansans to visit the Capitol and experience the law-making process.

Another change in 2025 is the creation in the Senate of the Committee on Government Efficiency (COGE). Following in the footsteps of President Trump's creation of the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE), COGE is tasked with exploring specific ways to save taxpayer dollars and reduce the size of government, thereby putting it on the side of the people and less on the side of government bureaucracy. In the coming days, a special email address and portal will be created for Kansans to submit their ideas for the COGE to review.

Although the first week of a session is largely ceremonial, with a lot of pomp and circumstance garnering much of the headlines – the State of the State, State of the Judiciary, and new State of the Military addresses before joint sessions of the legislature – committees did meet and began the hard work of legislating.

In the Assessment and Taxation Committee we introduced a bill, SB 35, to reduce property taxes and conducted a lengthy hearing on a proposed constitutional amendment (SCR 1603), a resolution I co-sponsored along with 17 other senators. If passed by two-thirds of the Legislature, followed by a vote of the people, SCR 1603 would help control property taxes by placing a cap on property valuation increases.

Although Governor Kelly has stated she will oppose any tax cuts in 2025, republicans understand property tax relief is an issue Kansans want us to address, so we are moving forward with legislation to provide that relief.

The Legislature will continue to work at a rapid pace, as President Masterson and Speaker of the House Dan Hawkins are committed to accomplishing the people's work in the 90 calendar days envisioned by the Kansas Constitution. Part of the effort includes a reformed budget process that will lead to more fiscal responsibility and a government that is truly on the side of Kansans.

You can follow committee meetings and action by legislators in both chambers by going to the legislature's website: kslegislature.org.

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

Virgil Peck
State Senator