

‘ THE PECK PERSPECTIVE ‘

(From the Capitol)

March 25, 2022

A Lot Done – Much More to Go: The “a lot done” is a reference to the many pieces of legislation that have passed one chamber or the other, but not both chambers. While the “much more to go” is to say there is still much work to be done by conference committees as they meet to negotiate the differences in the versions (wording) of legislation each chamber has passed.

Last week, the Senate completed a whirlwind three days of floor work. This week we’re in session for five days, primarily voting on conference committee reports – then we’ll take an April recess.

Most of the work should be concluded prior to the April break. However, in reality, there are only two items that are required to be completed this session; adoption of maps (redistricting) for the next decade and passing a state budget for FY ’23.

Update on Protecting Female Athletes: Last week I mentioned SB 484 – the Fairness in Women’s Sports Act. SB 484 is legislation to ensure an equal playing field for biological females so they only compete against other females, not boys who say they’re girls. When the Senate voted on SB 484, it passed with a veto-proof majority, 27–12. I voted yes.

The issue of boys competing in girl’s athletics was again in the national spotlight when, earlier this month, a biological male, William Thomas, who goes by Lia Thomas, “won” the NCAA championship in the women’s 500-yard freestyle swimming event. Emma Weyant, who finished 2nd, and a true female athlete, is from Florida. Therefore, Florida Governor, Ron DeSantis, stepped up and issued a proclamation declaring Emma the rightful winner. The proclamation said in part, *“Florida rejects the NCAA’s efforts to destroy women’s athletics, disapproves of the NCAA elevating ideology over biology, and takes offense at the NCAA trying to make others complicit in a lie.”*

Hopefully the Kansas House joins the Senate in passing SB 484.

Giving Voters a Say Regarding Tax Increases: It has long been my belief that elected officials must take a long, hard look at government efficiencies and spending reductions prior to any consideration of a tax increase. Therefore, when given the opportunity to be the lead proponent of SCR 1620 on the Senate floor, I eagerly engaged in the battle. I understood garnering the necessary votes to pass SCR 1620 would be a huge challenge, but it was the right thing to do.

SCR 1620 was a resolution that would allow Kansas voters to vote on a constitutional amendment to require a 2/3 majority vote by the legislature prior to any new tax or rate increase of an existing tax – sales, income, property, estate, etc. The bill is important to protecting Kansas families and job creators from the yo-yo effect they have experienced over the past several years of taxes going down one year and then up again a couple years later.

The legislature doesn't have the authority to amend the State Constitution, only voters can. Sadly, the vote to pass SCR 1620 fell two votes shy of the required 27, thereby denying voters an opportunity to vote. I voted yes.

After the vote, I entered an explanation of vote in the Senate Journal. It said in part: *"I understand some legislators don't like making it more difficult for the Kansas Legislature to increase taxes. I, for one, really like the idea of incentivizing the Legislature to look for efficiencies in government and in government spending before considering tax increases. However, SCR 1620 is not about what members of the Legislature want – it is about allowing Kansans the opportunity to vote on a constitutional amendment ... To put it another way. A yes vote says, 'I trust Kansas voters', while a no votes says 'I know what's best for Kansas voters.' ... If the Legislature allows voters to vote, and voters decide to amend the State Constitution, it will provide consistency in our tax code. Certainty of the tax code will be good for all Kansans."*

Health Care Freedom: Due to the recent pandemic, some government officials and some in the medical field want to thwart the freedom of a doctor to determine what is best for their patients. Caring doctors, who have done nothing wrong, other than disagree with a one-size-fits-all mentality, face disciplinary action from medical boards. Therefore, the Senate passed legislation, S. Sub for HB 2280, to protect the doctor-patient relationship.

Passage of S. Sub for HB 2280 would ensure Kansans have access to off-label medications for treatment of COVID-19 by allowing medical providers to prescribe off-label medications and ensure pharmacists fill the prescription. Additionally, the bill would clarify law to make certain that religious exemptions are treated consistently across all vaccines and ensure that sincerely held religious beliefs are not questioned. S. sub for HB 2280 passed the Senate 21–16. I voted yes.

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

Virgil Peck
State Senator

Photo Credit: T. Peck