

“ THE PECK PERSPECTIVE ”

(From the Capitol)

April 2, 2022

March 28th – April 1st was a week when many legislators spent significant time in the Capitol. For example, the final day, April 1st, the Senate gavelled in at 10:00 a.m. and didn't adjourn until 1:40 a.m. the next morning. There were a couple meal breaks, but several of us stayed in the State House working to finalize legislation in preparation for a floor vote. With legislators working no less than 10 hours that day, each certainly earned their \$88.66 daily salary – or \$8.87 per hour.

When the adjournment gavel sounded in the early morning of April 2nd, it signaled the start of a 3-week April recess. We'll return to Topeka on April 25th for what is called the veto session.

The good news (depending on one's perspective) is several issues have been finalized and are now headed to the Governor's desk. However, much work remains – sales tax on groceries, education funding and policy, health care issues related to COVID, etc.

Over the next several weeks, I'll be reporting on issues that have made it through the legislative process and have been sent to the Governor for her consideration. The Governor has full authority to use her veto pen to push her political agenda, but this is an election year, so it'll be interesting to learn what bills she may wish to veto, but instead allows to become law. Last session she used her veto pen with greater frequency than most Kansas governors in recent memory.

Redistricting Completed (SB 563): One issue the legislature settled is redistricting. The House passed a map for their members and amended the senate-passed map into the bill. During the Conference Committee process, the State Board of Education map was added. The final product, SB 563, passed both chambers by wide, bipartisan margins. The Senate voted 29–11, while the House vote was 83–40. It is believed that the Governor will not object too strongly to SB 563; but we shall see. I voted yes to SB 563.

Due to population loss, several House districts in SEK will be significantly different than they currently are. Senate District 15 will include all of Elk, Chautauqua, Montgomery, Labette and Neosho counties.

Update on Protecting Female Athletes (SB 160): I've written on this topic a couple times, so I'll be brief. The issue of keeping biological males (who say they are now a female) from participating in girl's athletics – thereby

keeping them out of girl's locker rooms and showers – is a topic of interest to voters, as they frequently bring up to me and communicate an urgency to see protections for young ladies put in place.

Following the House vote of 74–39 and a Senate vote of 25–13, the bill (with a new number), SB 160, The Fairness in Women's Sports Act, is headed to the Governor's desk. Last session Governor Kelly vetoed similar legislation. We'll see if she is willing in an election year to veto legislation supported by an overwhelming majority of Kansans from all political persuasions. Of course, I was a yes vote for SB 160.

Providing Another Health Insurance Option (SB 199): We constantly hear from the left about more health care options, when what they really want is increased government run health care – like expanding Obamacare. Options that don't include expanding government are viciously attacked and ridiculed. A case in point is the story of short-term health plans; a great option for certain segments of the population in need of health coverage.

The Senate voted 28–11 and the House voted 73–49 to pass SB 199, a bill to allow for the expansion of short-term, limited-duration health plans. Although not for everyone, persons between jobs, finishing school, or in need of a short-term solution, a limited duration health plan is a great option. These health insurance policies are not new to Kansas, they've been written for several years and have served many Kansans well. However, they are currently limited to a maximum duration of 12 months. Passage of SB 199 allows Kansans to renew a short-term policy up to two times; for a total of 36 months of coverage. Depending upon policy design, there may or may not be a requirement of medical re-underwriting for requalification. Additionally, certain government mandated coverages may not be included and pre-existing conditions can disqualify a person from coverage. It is important for insurance agents and insureds to fully discuss what is and what is not covered by the plans.

Again, a short-term, limited duration policy is not for everyone. But for those who want it, it is a good deal. Passage of SB 199 does not cost any taxpayer money and is a victory for free-market health care options as well as Kansas taxpayers. I voted yes to SB 199.

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

Virgil Peck
State Senator