

“ THE PECK PERSPECTIVE ”

(From the Capitol)

April 22, 2024

During the week of April 15th, another five bills were axed by the Governor – bringing her 2024 veto total to an even dozen (12). Interestingly, all the new vetoes are House bills, which means any veto override attempt will begin in the House. Some expect additional vetoes over the next few days.

Below is a brief description of the most recent vetoed bills.

HB 2465 – (The Culture of Life Tax Credit Act) Allows for adoption savings accounts, expands adoption tax credits, establishes a 70% tax credit (capped at \$10 million statewide) for donors to the more than 50 pregnancy resource centers and maternity centers in Kansas, and provides a sales tax exemption for pregnancy resource centers. Almost all Pregnancy Care Centers operate on private donations, including those in SEK. The tax credits would encourage more individuals and businesses to financially support these organizations and the great work they do. Additionally, the adoption savings accounts, and tax credits would help more families be able to afford to adopt children. The Senate vote was 29–10 and the House 83–38. I voted yes.

HB 2618 – Bars government agencies from accepting or spending federal money for “election-related” activities unless the money was approved by Congress or the Kansas Legislature. This federal money, often referred to as “Biden bucks”, because of a March 2021 executive order issued by President Biden, is seen as trying to infuse federal dollars into Kansas’ election process. The money was never appropriated by Congress and is not overseen by the Kansas legislature. It must be asked, “Do Kansans want Joe Biden doing things to impact elections or target specific election activities, especially when the money was not appropriated by Congress or overseen by the Kansas Legislature?” The Senate voted 26–13 and House 83–40. I voted yes.

HB 2583 – Toughens the penalties for injuring or killing a police dog or police horse. Called “Bane’s Law”, HB 2583 is in response to the death of a K-9 officer, named Bane, who was killed while chasing down a suspect in 2023. HB 2583 says if while fleeing or attempting to elude a police officer, the suspect causes the disability or death of a K-9 officer or police horse, the penalty will be a severity level 4, non-person felony and a minimum of 90 days, and up to several months, of imprisonment, plus a fine of not less than \$10,000. HB 2583 passed the Senate 25–15 and the House 115–6. I voted no.

I have great respect for our law enforcement officers and understand the value of a K-9 officer when searching for missing persons, hunting down suspects, or sniffing

out drugs and explosives. However, I saw the severity level 4 non-person felony as not in line with lower penalties for some crimes committed against human beings.

HB 2532 – Would credit tax revenue gained from betting on historical horse races to the Kansas Horse Breeding Development Fund and the Horse Fair Racing Benefit Fund. In 2022, the legislature passed SB 84, allowing for sports betting, and specifying that wagering on historical horse races could only be done at a facility in Sedgwick County. The Governor said HB 2532 would inadvertently increase taxes on the Wichita racing facility. The bill passed the Senate 34-3 and the House 88-32. I voted yes.

HB 2614 – Under current law, advance voting ballot envelopes must have the voter's signature or the signature of the person signing on behalf of an advance voter who is physically unable to sign. HB 2614 is designed to combat illegal ballot harvesting by requiring three additional bits of information on the advance ballot envelope. 1) The signature of the person authorized by the voter to deliver the advance ballot to the county election officer; 2) The printed name of the person authorized by the voter to deliver the advance ballot; and 3) Add the following statement on each advance ballot: "*KSA 25-2437 prohibits the transmission or delivery of more than 10 advance voting ballots by any one person.*" HB 2614 passed the Senate 26-13 and the House 75-48. If the bill becomes law, it would not be until January 1, 2025. I voted yes.

Updated Revenue Estimates: On April 19th, the Consensus Revenue Estimating Group (CREG) met to update their estimates of future revenue collections for Kansas. They meet each November and April, and everyone knows we're asking the impossible of the CREG. To obtain a revenue forecast, the CREG estimates the future yield and price of grain, price and production of crude oil, rate of manufacturing and employment, interest rate, and the rate of inflation. The CREG does their best, but only God knows future weather conditions, world turmoil, pandemic, etc.

The CREG estimates are important as they are the numbers the legislature uses when building a budget. I have advocated, and will continue to do so, that we use past collections, like a 3-yr. average, rather than the group's best guess/estimate.

The CREG decreased the FY 2024 forecast by \$100.3 million from their November estimate and increased the FY 2025 estimates by \$146.2 million. The total 2024 revenue projection (\$10.183 billion) is \$901 million higher than the FY 2023 actual collections (\$9.282 billion). And the 2025 number (\$10.403 billion) is \$220 million more than they expect in FY 2024. The CREG estimates the rate of inflation in Kansas to be 3% for the current fiscal year and 2.5% in FY 2025.

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

Virgil Peck
State Senator