

“ THE PECK PERSPECTIVE ”

(From the Capitol)

March 6, 2023

Last week I wrote about three bills, SB 169, SB 33 and SB 248, the Senate had passed that are designed to reduce the tax burden on taxpayers. As a reminder, SB 169 would reduce Kansas' current three income tax brackets (3.1%, 5.25% & 5.7%) down to a single rate of 4.75%; SB 33 would eliminate the state income tax on social security and retirement income; and SB 248 would, on January 1, 2024, eliminate all sales tax on groceries.

Reasons to Cut Taxes: Although I always like tax cuts, there are other reasons why now is a time for legislators to allow taxpayers to keep more money in their wallets. The February tax collection report continues the trend of collecting significantly more in taxes than needed. February's tax revenue exceeded projections by \$36.8 million and was \$47.3 million higher than the collection in February 2022. Additionally, according to the Congressional Joint Economic Committee, due to inflation, Kansas families need \$718 more in monthly income (\$8,616 annually) to have the same purchasing power they had when President Biden took office in January of 2021.

Studies have shown that a single income tax rate, as in SB 169, reduces the penalty on productivity and incentivizes workers to increase their working hours thereby bringing in more pay. Although Kansas legislators don't set the amount of social security and retirement income, we can give senior citizens a boost in purchasing power by allowing them to keep more of their income – SB 33.

Whether it's helping Kansans make ends meet or better competing in a rapidly changing economy, reducing taxes, combined with responsible government spending, will set us up as a regional and national leader in economic growth and quality of life. And, with time, reverse the trend of a declining population.

Helping Disabled Military Veterans: On Thursday, March 9th, I will again be testifying in support of legislation – SB 58. I sincerely believe if America owes anyone, it is those who are disabled because of their service in the United States military. Although legislators hear a lot of noise from many special interest groups, generally those who consume tax dollars, our military veterans are a quiet, humble group who frequently say, "I was just doing my job". I get that, but I also understand that many of the disabled veterans could have earned a higher income had they not become disabled. Therefore, I authored and introduced, along with seven co-sponsors, SB 58. I feel it is past time for the State to communicate our sincere gratitude to these American heroes.

SB 58 would provide a sales tax exemption for purchases and services made by, or on behalf of, 100% disabled military veterans – except purchases of motor vehicles. To qualify, a veteran must be certified as 100% disabled by the U.S. Department of

Veterans Affairs and receive permanent disability compensation. The Kansas Department of Revenue would be required to issue an exemption number (card) to each eligible veteran. If passed, the exemption would begin on January 1, 2024.

Defining a Woman: Legislators have been asked many, many times to provide protection for God's special creation – females. We're also asked to give guidance to public entities who appear to believe they must "accommodate" mis-guided persons who choose to think that God made a mistake with their gender at birth.

So, "What is a woman?" A question common-sense Kansans never thought would need to be legislated, but that's where we find ourselves in 2023. Due to controversy emerging in Kansas and across the country, Senate Republicans addressed the issue head-on by passing SB 180. The bill establishes *The Women's Bill of Rights* and specifies that an individual's "sex" means such person's biological sex, male or female, at birth. Additionally, it ensures that when there is a designation of single-sex spaces, such as women's locker rooms, prisons, and bathrooms, they are only for biological females. Finally, SB 180 requires schools, state agencies, or political subdivisions that collect vital statistics to identify individuals as being either male or female at birth. Passage of SB 180 does not change existing laws but establishes a legal definition of sex-based terms for clarity in the implementation of current laws.

Although it should have passed unanimously, the vote was 26-11 with 25 republicans voting yes, three passing and all democrats voting no. I voted yes.

Protecting Children: Another bill that just a few years ago would be thought of as unthinkable is SB 233. However, most legislators are committed to protecting our children – particularly when clear evidence is emerging that vulnerable children are being pressured into decisions with profound life-and-body altering consequences.

SB 233, the *Kansas Child Mutilation Prevention Act* allows persons who had "sex reassignment surgery" or other sex-altering procedures performed on them as a child to sue the doctor who performed the gender reassignment service. In addition to civil action, SB 233 bans gender reassignment surgery on minors and requires the Kansas Board of Healing Arts to revoke the medical license of a physician found guilty of performing such procedure on a minor. Actions against these doctors must be commenced on or before the individual's 21st birthday. Passage of SB 233 would force doctors to carefully consider the consequences of performing a sex-altering (and life-altering) surgery upon a child. Provisions in SB 233 would not apply if the child was born with a medically verifiable disorder of sex development. The bill passed 26-11. I voted yes.

Until next time, may the blessings of God be yours

Virgil Peck
State Senator