

The many challenges found in government

Early in the session I introduced a bill to help an accounting firm in Phillipsburg. The process was exciting to watch: write the bill, introduce the bill in committee, must pass out of committee, introduce the bill on the Chamber floor, needs 63 votes, goes to a Senate committee, talk to the bill in the Senate committee, pass out of Senate committee, get 21 votes in the Senate, and finally gets signed by the Governor. It is currently in front of the governor and he has promised to sign the bill. I will definitely get a signed copy and frame the bill for my office.

News from your legislator
Ward Cassidy



Committee work is completed and we spent three long days of debate on the floor. There was not a regular session Thursday or Friday in order to allow Conference Committees to meet and reconcile House and Senate positions on a number of issues. The legislature is then back for a final week of debate, which will include a number of conference committee reports and possibly the Mega Budget Bill. There is a break on April 1 and we then return to Topeka on April 27, for the Veto Session, and to finalize the 2012 budget.

Immigration has become a hot topic in Topeka. A representative made an off the cuff comment, in Committee, suggesting that Kansas use the same tactics to control illegal immigrants, as what is used to control feral hogs, by shooting them from helicopters. This has been in the headlines worldwide for the past week and it appears that it will slow all work on immigration because it is now tainted with a bigoted ring.

The Senate Federal and State Affairs failed to endorse the Community Defense Act. The proposal would restrict sexually oriented businesses from opening within 1,000 feet of a school, park, church, library, or residence. The measure passed the House which makes it eligible for discussion during conference committee meetings, but at this stage it doesn't look like the Senate is interested in spending any time on the measure.

Governor Brownback announced the launch of a website that allows Kansans to submit laws and regulations they believe should be repealed. When an idea is submitted to the website, <http://repealer.ks.gov>, the office of the Repealer will run a cost-benefit analysis on each law or regulation. Kansans who submit proposals will receive a status report within thirty days of submitting their idea.

Here is an attempt to explain the House's March to Economic Growth (MEGA). The MEGA bill reduces the corporate and individual income tax with a trigger based on growth. If state tax receipts increase over the immediately preceding fiscal year, then a corresponding reduction in both taxes will occur. The overall goal of this bill is institutional change that will shift to more consumption (sales tax) and less production (income) taxes. The House is committed to collecting Kansas tax revenue by growing the economy rather than increasing the tax rate on current revenue streams. By providing a consistent and less complicated tax structure, this bill limits the role of state government and fosters business growth and investment. We know that states without individual income tax experience population and revenue growth at a consistently higher rate than states with high income taxes.

During debate on this bill an amendment was approved that will lower the state sales tax to 5.7 beginning in 2013. There was also an amendment approved that steps down the corporate income tax rate to 3.5 while working to eliminate the personal income tax completely. Remember that the Senate still has to concur.

There is a proposal to save \$10 million dollars by doing away with Kan Ed in appropriations. I feel that Kan Ed is invaluable for Western Kansas and have talked to everyone I can to gather support to keep this necessary component for our schools, libraries, and hospitals.

KPERS is now my leading e-mail question. There should be an agreement between the House and the Senate and we will be able to see how we are going to attack this major concern.

The budget proposals and budget cuts are becoming more and more difficult as we move along in this session. A few of my new legislative friends were discussing life in the legislature and we have likened it to the following example: we all know that the state of California is drowning sixty feet deep under water, Kansas is six feet deep underwater, either way if the problem is not corrected, we drown. It is going to hurt, but we have to quit spending more tax dollars than we bring in.

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Letting a non-issue define us as voters

Kansas does not have as many budget woes as many states. I like to think this is because Kansans are smart and live within their means.

Governor Brownback moved into office with a plan to shut down several agencies and boards he feels can be blended into others without cutting necessary services.

He has a tax plan he thinks will attract people to rural areas. I'm doubtful. I'd prefer seeing some tax reduction for number one: MOI. Possibly I'm not looking at the big picture but no interest trumps self interest.

It does seem the mood of the statehouse is to cut all existing programs, with no funding for new programs except if Kansas Secretary of State Kobach gets his way, investigating voter fraud cases. (See Secretary speaks at annual meeting, Norton Telegram, March 25, 2011)

Kobach garnered write up in Newsweek this year. He is a very smart man. He grew up in Kansas, graduating from Washburn Rural. A native son to be proud of. He graduated summa cum laude from Harvard and studied at Oxford on a Marshall scholarship. In other words, he's a lot smarter than I am.

He has earned the respect of anti-immigration folks across the country; and consulted with several other states, helping them write anti-immigration laws.

I don't have a problem with requiring Kansans to provide proof of citizenship

This Too Shall Pass
Nancy Hagman



when they register to vote. But I do wonder where the increased "resources for investigating and prosecuting election fraud" are going to come from.

The new people moving in aren't going to pay for it. They won't have to pay taxes.

Kobach says "so far this year we have seen 13 cases that need to be investigated."

I don't know how much money it will take Kobach to investigate 13 cases of suspected voter fraud. But we need to ask ourselves how wise it is to spend precious tax dollars in such a matter.

Schools funding, social services, every phase of state and local government has had or faces massive cuts.

Are 13 cases of suspected voter fraud really worth taking even more funds from needed services and education?

I think it is doubtful investigation would prove even half of these cases were truly voter fraud. So in the whole state of Kansas maybe seven people voted fraudulently. How often do seven votes change the outcome of an election? It seems a victimless crime.

How much will it cost to revamp our

election process? How many man hours to go through the roles and screen all the voters already registered? Is this where we want our tax dollars spent?

What would you rather see funded? Meal sites for senior citizens? Rural hospitals? Education? 13 cases of possible voter fraud?

When I sat on an election board I could see how voter fraud could occur, but not as Kobach wants us to believe. As we looked over the list of registered voters there were people who had died or moved. There were young people who registered when they turned 18 but long since moved on; some even to other states. I'm not sure how legal residency and absentee voting works. But some of the cases did not pass the smell test. Of course those people did not show up expecting to vote so----problem solved!

In our own family I know at least one of our kids was still on the local voter registration list after she had registered to vote elsewhere. We need to improve the system for sure.

What I find it alarming is how Kobach plays on our prejudices. He gives the impression every suspicious voter case is an illegal Hispanic. From my experience the biggest problems might arise because we do not update voter registration lists.

Kobach is a very smart man. I hope Kansans are even smarter and do not allow this non-issue to define us or waste our tax dollars.

Ignorance is at the root of prejudice

My mother, not given to using profanity, said, "Well, they said it would be a cold day in hell when a Catholic became president and it is." The temperatures dipped down as the newly elected John Fitzgerald Kennedy took the oath of office. I was in high school when the Nixon-Kennedy campaign occurred and as strange as it seems to young people now, many Americans feared having a Catholic president. Statements such as "I don't want the pope running our country," were frequently heard.

Ignorance is at the root of prejudice both now and a half a century ago and with human nature being what it is probably a century from now as well. When Catholicism seemed shrouded in mystery we feared their influence on our society.

Phase II
Mary Kay Woodyard



Now similar fears loom as cultures and ethnicities collide with our seemingly "right" way of doing things.

We hear the rantings of power hungry politicians searching for a "platform" on which to stand, while the level headed thinking of others goes unnoticed. That was true when Kennedy was elected as well. Richard Nixon refused to debate the religious difference preferring to campaign on issues and experience instead.

Whereas the highly respected Norman Vincent Peale, at that time head of the National Conference of Citizens for Religious Freedom, said perhaps Kennedy couldn't "withstand... the hierarchy of his church."

The truth be known there is something to fear in each of us, whether it is the power hungry, the fearful cynic or the liberal hopeful. We fear that which we do not know, but what about what we think we do know? Those with all the answers unwilling to ask any questions should be the most concerning to us. My mother also used to say nothing breeds success like success itself, perhaps nothing breeds fear like fear itself. <<mailto:mkwoodyard@ruraltel.net>>
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Comments from a grateful reader

Dear Editor,

We would like to let you know how much we enjoy your paper. Initially we subscribed for business purposes only, now we continue our subscription due to the quality writing and interesting information. We especially like the columns on the editorial page which include Nancy Hagman, MK Woodyard and others. Its good to see a well-put together local newspaper which is managed on a local basis (as far as we know) and is unique to the community in which it is published.

Thank you.
Kathy and Bruce Wyrill
Kirwin Kansas



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