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Baker's Briefs by Rep. Dave Baker, 68th District

  The Kansas Legislature finished the 2020 session last week with a 25-hour marathon, dealing with more bills than during all the previous days of the session combined. The marathon day started early, and 14 hours later legislators narrowly approved suspending rules to disregard the law stating no legislation passed after midnight is valid. There will be a legal challenge to verify the constitutionality of the action, but wasting tax dollars on frivolous lawsuits never deters some leaders.

  Due to a limited amount of space, I will not attempt to recount the bills which were passed.  But the overall goal of those holding leadership positions was to wear down legislators by holding everyone on the floor until they yielded to what leadership wanted.  A host of bills was approved in the middle of the night that most legislators had never seen. This was done to address the COVID-19 pandemic with a response bill in an attempt to modernize our emergency powers law and lay the foundation for our state’s recovery. Sources close to Gov. Laura Kelly have indicated these bills, if constitutionally legal, will be vetoed by her.

  When a final decision is reached, I will provide a summary of the contents in these bills.  One of the bills is 78 pages in length and combines multiple bills into one.  Included in this group of bills were some good ideas and some not so good. However, all of them needed to be researched as to how they will impact Kansans. Another bill dealt with restricting the governor’s executive power by including more local control. That sounds good, but another bill was passed restricting local control. The devil is in the details.  However, I am not supportive of the legislature interfering with local elected officials without good reason.

  The Flint Hills Regional Planning Commission announced the hiring of a new director, Christy Rodriguez.  I am looking forward to working with this group on projects to promote the region. The FHRPC website providing the latest information on area economic news can be accessed at [www.flinthillsregion.org](http://www.flinthillsregion.org/). This group of leaders has assisted with many of the successes in the region by leading a cooperative area-wide coalition. Working together promoting regional assets will attract more industry than going it alone. The ability of individuals to make a difference by sharing positive experiences about the quality of life in the region is a powerful tool for economic development.

  Working remotely is now one of the fastest growing movements in the business community. Area lakes are busier than in past years with a surge in visitors who want to get outside and take advantage of nature. Hiking, biking, fishing and sitting by a fire pit telling stories costs very little and can be experienced by everyone.

  This is an election year.  I will be traveling the district to visit with constituents about current affairs and what we can do to make Kansas better. It is also a time when candidates make exaggerated statements to garner headlines.  An example is the legislator who said recently in an interview, “I have hundreds, if not thousands, of constituents going hungry in my district due to the actions of this governor”. I reminded him his wealthy district has about 24,000 constituents and if his statement is true, we need to assist in feeding the masses. He admitted that maybe his statement wasn’t entirely true, but it sounded good. I have learned to never dismiss a statement that cannot be verified, regardless of how unrealistic it may sound. When people are informed they do the right thing. Democracy is not a spectator sport.

  Stay in touch with your questions, concerns, and suggestions. Dave

E-mail: [dave.baker@house.ks.gov](mailto:dave.baker@house.ks.gov)

P.O. Box 252

Council Grove, KS 66846

Phone: [(620) 767-2528](tel:(620)%20767-2528)

Email: [davebaker.kansas@gmail.com](mailto:davebaker.kansas@gmail.com)