Monitoring The Money

The Kansas Legislature has been searching and researching the issue of school finance trying to decide how much money is enough. The opinions vary widely and we have finally reached what hopefully will be enough. Education is the largest part of most state budgets and has been neglected by officials elected in past years. The situation nationwide is critical as states attempt to calm the waters of students and teachers who are determined to change the situation immediately. Kansas has done a better job than surrounding states, but we are also behind and now attempting to correct the situation. The Kansas Supreme Court will have an opinion interpreting the law that was established years ago giving them the authority to be one of the final measures. My opinion is the performance of students during and after their years in the classroom is the ultimate decider and it will take years to determine the success. It takes more than money, but it’s the job of the legislature as we appropriate funds that take up almost 63% of the state general funds.

Human Services are an obligation of the state of Kansas which includes KanCare (Medicaid programs) and foster care. These take up 26% of the budget. Public Safety is six per cent of the budget which provides the Adjutant General’s Department, Highway Patrol, and EMS. There are eight adult prisons and a juvenile corrections complex included in this budget.

The General Government which includes the Governor, Legislature, Attorney General, Judicial Branch, and Department of Revenue and Administration takes another 4.9%. These percentages add up to a large number of dollars that it takes to run government.

The revenues for Kansas have continued to come in over estimates giving us hope that we are in better shape financially than had been forecast. Every month the numbers increase and we are 6.4% up since July 2017. The odds of this continuing are running out and we can expect a correction in the near future. Uncertain markets will be a negative impact on income to Kansans. We all suffer and prosper with the actions of the political machines in Washington DC.

Taxes are the main issue constituents continue to contact me about. The concern is not about paying taxes, like a few very wealthy individuals who attempt to control government, but the flaws in the assessment. We run government on three taxes: Income, Property and Sales. Internet shopping has changed everything and past actions by our congressional delegation has made the situation worse. We have not collected internet sales tax correctly leading to store closures and forcing property taxes to home owners. The situation may not have been avoidable, but the incentive given to out of state companies is definitely unfair. Everyone who serves in government will be searching for a solution and the options will be unpopular for those who have avoided sales tax. I will further updates on this issue in the future, but there is going to be changes made in an attempt to help equalize the obligation. Contact me with your suggestions and concerns as we explore different avenues to address the situation. Borrowing and making irresponsible reductions are not a viable answer any more.

The legislature is taking a break until April 26 and I will be traveling the district meeting with groups and individuals listening to concerns and sharing insight into what’s happening in Topeka. Contact me by email, phone or snail mail and share your views.

Representative Dave Baker Email me at dave.baker@house.ks.gov or call me at 620-767-2528.