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

  The news this week from Topeka is the legislature will meet May 21 to address legislation to keep the state operating without interruption. Leadership from the House intends to keep the number of bills to a minimum, while Senate leaders plan to introduce headline-grabbing bills in promoting their bids for higher office.

  Committees will communicate both in person and via ZOOM on the Internet before the final day of the 2020 legislative session. Included in these discussions will be bills to determine the extent of legislative oversight Gov. Laura Kelly will have in spending the estimated $1.2 billion Kansas has the potential to receive from the federal government stimulus fund.  The Commerce Committee will review the unemployment and other benefits systems.  The Tax Committee will discuss property tax in regards to potentially waiving interest and penalties on delayed payments.  Hopefully, committee members will not listen to the group who wants to give away money. The Judiciary Committee is scheduled to discuss liabilities for businesses and healthcare professionals, consider how government agencies share information and address alleged open records violations during this chaotic time. More details will be available as we get closer to the final day.

  Last month, Gov. Kelly outlined her plan for steering the state through this uncertain time, but did not include a date when the state will fully re-open. This left room for people to criticize and politicize the shortcomings. Kansas records fewer COVID-19 infections than most states due to our social distancing and a cautious scientific-based plan, but the economic impact has changed the world. Protesters have called for an end to the restrictions, but the number of cases and deaths continues to climb, forcing the restrictions to continue.

  All the world hopes the number of people testing positive for COVID-19 will decline and we can resume “normal” daily activities. While the virus has forced most everyone to stay home, it has provided time for innovation. Creative individuals, who are passionate, focused and courageous enough to take a risk, will prosper during this chaotic time. The Kansas Department of Agriculture is in charge of food inspections and has received 50 applications for new grocery stores, restaurants and convenience stores. More requests are anticipated. Shopping in large box stores and warehouses is less appealing during this time. This creates an unprecedented opportunity for innovation and mobilization of a different kind for a different type of fight.

  Companies who left this country for lower production costs are relocating back home to produce personal protective equipment and potentially develop a vaccine to solve the crisis. Kansans are capitalizing on opportunities which have arisen by making masks, hand sanitizer and selling food directly to consumers in establishing trends that will continue into the future. Solving a problem or recognizing an opportunity can be accomplished regardless of age. Famous people do not like to work on small problems. They fail to plant acorns which yield mighty oak trees. If history is a predictor of future success, an individual or small company will provide a solution to the current situation long before a corporate CEO.

  The November election will be the most important in the history of our state and country in determining who writes the laws by which we are governed. Restrictions placed on us by the virus will force candidates to use creative direct mail, television, radio, newspaper and electronic advertising. My favorite part of serving is knocking on doors, walking in parades and participating in numerous local events, but these events will not be available this year. We will have to discuss the issues and campaign whenever the opportunity presents itself. The rhetoric of some campaigns reminds me of a quote from the *The* *Economist*magazine: “If you can afford a glass house, you can throw anything you want”. Contact me with suggestions, questions and concerns by phone, mail or email. Dave

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