**CHALLENGING TIMES AHEAD**

**with Representative Dave Baker, 68th District**

Major decisions are going to be made during the next few weeks in the Kansas government about how we fund and value education for future years. The courts have ruled that we need more money in education but didn’t state exactly how much. We can fund schools with a progressive formula to ensure an adequate and fair education, or we can kick the can down the road as we have since 1992. There is very little support for another tax increase, and a group is proposing to change the state constitution, reducing input from the courts. This will be hotly debated, and I will share information as it becomes available. There are strong personalities on both sides, and our children’s futures are tied to the final decision. We need kids because nobody attends a ballgame to watch the old guys. No major legislation will be accomplished until this is resolved.

The Senate and House of Representatives passed legislation to regulate the expansion of value-added animal agriculture. There were many presentations and discussions, both pro and con, about the impact of livestock feeding operations. Governor Brownback is still not popular after he surprised a county with a large poultry operation. It was met with hostility, and those wounds have not healed. The bill passed both houses by a wide margin. The agriculture committee is also analyzing proposals on recreational trails and will hear presentations about industrial hemp production this next week.

Transparency is currently the buzzword in government as we review subsidies that were provided without Kansans’ knowledge. Exposing all the incentives sounds good, but my experience in business has taught me to never show all the cards in your hand. Kansas has a lot of programs in place that have not had a value placed on them, and this may change. Unintended consequences can produce crazy results, and this may be one of those bills.

Being a good steward of tax dollars is my top priority, and it is time to take a new approach to the state budget. We have witnessed the past governor and his allies mismanage our assets in the name of self-interest. I am an informed conservative who doesn’t believe in spending money that we do not have. The federal government is headed down the same path, and my prediction is it will produce the same results we witnessed in Kansas, except they own a printing press. The President is talking about a trade war, and the biggest loser will be agriculture due to the reliance on world markets for our products. Old ways die hard, and we must understand the difference between giving up and letting go. It’s time for a new direction, and we need to remind our Washington D.C. delegation to be careful when standing too close to a stink bomb or they will smell too.

Contact me with your questions and concerns about the issues we face in government today. Please let me know if you are in the Capitol, and I will make time to visit. Serving the district is a great honor, and I enjoy discussing opportunities to make Kansas better. Michael Jordan said it best, “Talent wins games, teamwork and intelligence wins championships.” Go KU, K-State and WSU!

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