  Legislative committees have been doing their work in Week 6 of the session in formulating bills and passing legislation that will help Kansans, but barriers to progress are mounting.  Our endeavors are going nowhere as we continue to struggle with individuals in leadership. They are trailing in the polls and need to make a lot of noise to improve their chances of winning a higher office. This grandstanding is costing taxpayers millions of dollars in lost time and opportunity.

  We have worked to make several changes to existing laws and introduced legislation to unlock new revenue streams, but the leadership’s plan is to do nothing until we cave to into their visions. This reminds me of a tantrum performed by children who need a good trip to the woodshed. It will end or we go home and face voters who continue to pay for these carpetbaggers who don’t care about Kansas. We need a plan on how to eliminate the possibility of this fiasco again.

  The Rural Revitalization Committee conducted hearings this week about long-term care facilities and the new concepts which are being developed. Kansas ranks in the “Top 10” nationally with 20 closures in the last five years, including 17 in rural areas. We have an opportunity to use existing facilities and build new ones to take care of people in need of assistance. Several communities have built facilities offering more individual care to residents. They are not hotels, but certainly don't resemble the older facilities that institutionalized residents. The positive progress of residents is shown in multiple assessments.  We need to be a leader in this area. The operators shared the obstacles to progress and challenged us to make changes to take advantage of the opportunity.  Elected officials have paid very little attention to elderly Kansans and we need to change the situation. Increasing payments and evaluating ridiculous citations for minor violations is a start.  The Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism is working to make trails accessible to seniors and I will have a progress report in the weeks ahead. Thinking outside the box and engaging a new group of volunteers will make for a better and healthier Kansas. The Department of Motor Vehicles defines “elderly” as anyone over age 60. Now, I’m one of the “Old People”!

  The Transportation Committee has passed several bills dealing with license tags and naming sections of highways after distinguished Kansans. The stories of sacrifices made by these individuals is a reminder of our past that is being carried into the future. We also consulted with county treasurers to adjust fees assessed when registering a vehicle. Surrounding states charge significantly higher rates to ensure counties didn’t lose money on this process. Geary County Treasurer Kathy Tremont and Riley County Treasurer Shilo Heger spoke to the Tax Committee and told us about changes we could make to help constituents with partial payments. They provided examples to remind us that local control is best. We got the message loud and clear.

  Every year, we have new issues bogging down the legislative process and this year is no different. Elected officials need to make changes to the process of how we govern, and that takes courage. Running for higher office while holding a current office is not acceptable. You can only have one mother! Do your job or quit and find another. Whether it is Washington, D.C. or Topeka, climbing the ladder to advance a career can result in something being neglected.  Pres. Harry Truman summed it up 70 years ago and it is still true today: “I remember when I first came to Washington. For the first 6 months, you wonder how the hell you ever got here. For the next 6 months, you wonder how the hell the rest of them got here”.  These words still ring true.

  Call me with suggestions and questions on issues as we head into the last half of the legislative session.

Dave

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