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

  Back to normal, but when? That continues to be the question asked by everyone during the COVId-19 pandemic and nobody has been able to determine a date. Experts who study viruses tell us the date will be set by the escalation or decline in the number of cases in an area. Historical events in April include: The Revolutionary War battles of Lexington and Concord, George Washington becoming president, the surrender of General Lee, the first Boston Marathon, the U.S. entering World War I, the Black Sunday Dust Storm and the Oklahoma City bombing. Those were difficult events and times, but we managed to survive and prosper in the decades that followed. History is on our side, and we will survive the current crisis if debt does not become so great that it consumes and divides the country. Appeasement is what led us into war following the Great Depression. Today, we need a clear path to show us the way to a better future.

  Video-conferencing allows participation in meetings previously not possible, and we are using the technology extensively. Discussions focus on identifying changes needed to safely reopen the state. Proposals that set protocols for a response plan, establish optional workplace protocols, define work zones and set safety guidelines are at the top of the list. Employees need to check their temperatures and adhere to the new guidelines on social distancing and maintain separate teams while working. When feasible, employees should be encouraged to work flexible shifts to limit the spread of the virus. Employers are establishing plans to respond to the changes stemming from new government recommendations. Previously, we recognized perfect attendance in school or work, but that may have been a contributing factor in the spread of COVID-19.

  The legislature made changes to help those who are suffering loss of a job by waiving the one-week waiting period for unemployment benefits and extending them to 26 weeks. More proposed ideas to help are: Delaying tax filings and sales tax payments, expanding loan programs, pause tax audits, create tax credits for businesses that continue to pay employees who must self-isolate and the list of ideas continues. Leaders are evaluating proposals and eliminating those which do more harm than good. Economic and employment reports will identify where to focus our resources, and they will be stretched thin. Property taxes are due in May and many Kansans will struggle to pay them and delinquencies will rise. There is a proposal to delay payment for 90 days, which reminds me that in politics stupidity is not a handicap. I will not support this idea as proposed.

  The surge in unemployment will motivate individuals to look at new opportunities, hopefully in different locations. Kansas will survive and prosper if leaders invest assets wisely. Our state has been a source of leadership throughout history and I am confident we will continue to set the example. Pres. Dwight D. Eisenhower, who grew to manhood in Kansas, provided great leadership and offered great advice when said: “Only Americans can hurt America” and “Leadership consists of nothing but taking responsibility for everything that goes wrong and giving your subordinates credit for everything that goes well”. Good advice, and I am praying we find the next Eisenhower very soon.

  Contact me with your suggestions, questions and concerns. Stay positive, celebrate the change in seasons, get outdoors and spend time helping those who are less fortunate.   Dave

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