**CHANGE IS IN THE AIR**

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

The Kansas Legislature is back to work analyzing hundreds of bills that have been introduced to the respective bodies. Several legislators have prepared more than a truckload of bill amendments ready to alter the original documents. This usually leads to a prolonged discussion and debate, which slows the process to a crawl. The result is not always bad though. Sometimes facts surface after the initial introduction or a legislator gets the chance to present a different perspective. Unintended consequences need to be identified as soon as possible, and due process is required to minimize adverse effects. One example occurred when the legislature enacted a law in 2017 requiring inspection of carnival rides that inadvertently impacted everything from golf carts to inflatables. The goal to craft a bill that ensured public safety and protected the amusement ride business resulted in a disaster. The new law will shut down most operators, which is not the desired outcome, so implementation has been delayed. Limiting unintended consequences is one of the main reasons for the pace of government. Slow change is best.

There are more reports this week about the disaster in the Kansas Department for Children and Families alleging a systematic underreporting of child fatalities and providing inaccurate information to the state review board. I have written in previous columns about this situation and will continue to do so. It is destroying some school districts and is changing the way we live in every community. Lack of oversight and the ability of unethical individuals to profit from this group of children is unacceptable. The following are facts that were presented to the committee about children in foster care after they turn 18 and are no longer in the system: **1: Full- and part-time employment is 53%, which means 47% are not working. 2: This group has an incarceration rate of 25% in the last two years. 3: Almost 40% have children by the time they reach age 21. 4: In the last two years, 34% have been homeless. 5: The rate of this group needing public assistance is more than 38%.** These numbers are a glaring report card of the results on privatizing government services for children. The report didn’t mention that most of these youth never leave the state. The coverup is widespread, and details continue to come to light as leadership changes. Many different individuals and groups try to help, but government bureaucracy and severity of the situation forces most to give up. The Governor proposed hiring an additional 20 additional child welfare personnel, but the department has 300 vacancies. I will have more detailed information and proposals to address the situation, but time is not our ally. Changes that are made to our youth and social programs need to be monitored closely. Children should be one of our main priorities, and actions should reflect our commitment. Change is needed, and contrary opinions should be falling on deaf ears.

Our sources in Washington D.C. have encouraging news regarding the possibility of a Supreme Court ruling on internet sales tax in the very near future. This has produced the worst disaster in Kansas ever. Elected officials give excuses as to why they will not address the issue, and remote companies led by the wealthiest people in the world prosper. Amazon founder and CEO Jeff Bezos is officially the richest person in world making more than $5 billion in 2017 but paid no federal income tax. Previously, Amazon had a tax rate of 11.4%, while the carryout boy at the grocery store paid a minimum of 16% in federal taxes plus a tax on every dollar he spent. The goal is to keep poor people poor while the rich steal the world. There will be enormous pressure to resist change, but we must insist on equality. Elected officials will be held accountable; the question is when. We have watched the demise of businesses across the country with the changes in technology, but the lack of sales tax collection has bankrupted communities and states needlessly. Reliable sources report the unintended consequences of this event will be larger than the collection of sales tax. Companies who operate by selling illegal products and services will be identified with severe penalties enforced, and the good guys will prevail. I will report on this issue as public information is available.

Revenues for the state continue to come in over estimates, reports from the experts on the school finance issue are positive, Governor Colyer continues to pursue positive changes in leadership positions, our KEPRS fund is producing stellar returns, and state employees are encouraged with the possible changes in compensation. Warm weather brings new hope for moisture to save the winter wheat crop, while pastures and ponds will receive a much-needed drink as well. The change of seasons has arrived.

I have had many constituents contact me about a variety of issues and express their viewpoints. I appreciate the intelligent input and encourage everyone to attempt to resolve issues with a harmonious outcome. The national network news usually has more entertainment quality than factual information. We have been shocked so many times by embellished news that people are numb to the severity of many important issues. Watching television is not the best way to get facts in my opinion, and nothing replaces individual research. Sitting in front of a box that essentially has become a sewer of information is not a change for the better. There is always change and we will adapt, but the goal is to not compromise our moral convictions on right and wrong. During Lent each year, we are reminded to resist the temptation to be indifferent and to stand up for the teachings of the prophets. We need to focus our energy on new opportunities and let go of the old. Jim Rohn the philosopher stated, “Your life does not get better by chance, it gets better by change.” We are at a crossroads in government with the focus on transparency and accountability, but some will resist the change. Become informed and educated by reading and listening to obtain correct information then decide how the changes will affect your life. They are coming to your home in the form of drones, electric cars, high-speed internet shopping and smart phones, but beware of dumb people who are popping up everywhere! Adapt to the changes and enjoy the benefits.

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