**IT’S BLOWIN’ UP A STORM**

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

The weeks have gone by in a whirlwind this legislative session. We have passed several bills in record time but have fumbled around and missed the deadline on others. We have cussed and discussed bills about adoption, agriculture, budgets, education, elections, marijuana, politics, the second amendment and, of course, taxes. The legislature has committees researching each of these issues, and I invite your input when you have something to contribute. Constituents have contacted me about several of these issues, and I do my best to make sure their perspectives are represented.

This week, we voted on numerous bills that will have a direct impact in the near future as a result of technology. Driver’s licenses are eligible to be recognized with a federal designation, and that has caused anguish with the need to locate buried information. The state will soon allow this information to be stored electronically, which will help. Paying taxes and renewing other licenses will also move online. This will help alleviate the waiting period in offices and make it easier for everyone. That’s the goal, but I’m sure there will be unforeseen issues.

We voted to make it legal for universities to conduct research on hemp and voted down an amendment on medical marijuana. It was a lengthy 116-page document that I had never seen and did not support. If the opportunity to research and obtain opinions about the issue is possible, it will probably be passed. There were many emotional testimonies, and hopefully we will have another opportunity to review soon. Amendments presented at the last possible minute do not allow time for research, and I have strong reservations about supporting them. Amendments on guns, adoption and several other issues did not receive my support for the same reason. Nobody can change your life like a lazy legislature. The words “trust me” are usually accompanied by a sweetheart deal for someone.

Legislators support Medicaid expansion, but there is a leadership problem. They obviously haven’t heard from constituents in the medical, long-term-care and EMS fields. We are bankrupting the providers at a record pace. The argument about funding is ridiculous and needs addressed. Schools are important, but so is the health of our communities. I will continue to be a strong supporter of this movement. Time is running out, and leaders need to focus on resolving this issue. We have reduced funding and increased operations to an unsustainable level. It is not a political issue.

Schools will be in the headlines for the next month as we decide their future. There is a conservative faction that wants no public education or taxes. This group is not conservative but rather ignorant about history and how vital it is that everyone receive an education. Governor Colyer will be judged on the outcome of this issue, and his political career may hang in the balance. Money alone will not resolve the issue, no matter how much we allocate. Technology is moving at lightning speed to change schools and society, testing our ability to instill our long-held core values. Good schools are an investment in the future quality of life, but all investments need oversight and review. This issue has become polarizing. The solution will not be acceptable to some, but we need to move forward. As Alexander Graham Bell put it, “Sometimes we stare so long at a door that is closing that we don’t see the one that is opening.”

Please contact me and share your suggestions on these topics and others so we can reach a solution to continue making Kansas the best place to live.

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