

We have completed the first half of the Legislative Session with the state budget as our top priority. Although Governor Brownback has proposed a necessarily leaner budget, over \$70 million has been added back through the Senate Ways & Means committee and debate process. I introduced an amendment to the budget on the Senate floor that would have restored the Governor's original proposal; however, the amendment was defeated by a coalition of Democrats and liberal Republicans. Since the Senate conferees are unwilling to make the necessary cuts, the rescission bill will remain stuck in committee. This action will force the Governor to make unilateral cuts in order to prevent a deficit in the current fiscal year.

In an effort to increase the amount of families' take-home pay and stimulate the Kansas economy, I have proposed a move to eliminate or reduce personal income tax rates in Kansas by a percentage proportional to any actual receipt increases from the previous fiscal year. The proposal is modeled after a recent Oklahoma bill that has bolstered the Oklahoma economy. This option would only apply if the total income and excise tax receipts are greater in the current fiscal year than the last fiscal year. Florida and Texas have no personal income tax and, as a result, have attracted many retirees and other families to their states. In contrast, Kansas has lost \$600 million of income that is now reported in states that have no income tax ([www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov), State to State Migration Data). An increase in personal cash flow results in more personal spending that, in turn, increases sales and use tax receipts, ultimately widening the tax base and allowing the government to handle inflation without raising tax rates.

The Senate has considered 212 bills and sent 85 bills to the House. We will now begin considering the bills that the House has sent over to the Senate. Mid-session is a very busy time as committees crunch through testimonies, research, and negotiations. For instance, here's a quick look at my daily schedule for last week that does not include time spent collaborating and negotiating with colleagues to bring forth the best possible legislation:

7:15 am	Senate Ways & Means Budget Subcommittee
8:30 am	Commerce Committee
9:30 am	Financial Institutions & Insurance Committee
10:30 am	Ways & Means Committee (Budget)
12:00 pm	Senate Ways & Means Budget Subcommittee

1:30 pm        Utilities Committee  
2:30 pm        Senate Session  
3:30 or 4 pm   Senate Ways & Means Budget Subcommittee  
5:00 – 10 pm   Evening meetings with associations and groups

In addition to budget concerns, some of the hot topics currently being debated include the Voter Photo ID bill (HB 2067), PAC Check-off Bill (HB 2130), and the Expanded Alcohol Sales bill (SB 54). Many of you have contacted me regarding these and other bills. I want you to know that I read everything you send me, but it's a challenge to respond personally to each one. Please accept my apologies if you have recently contacted me or my office and have not received a personal response. I appreciate the time you take to help me better understand the issues as you express your opinions about these important bills, and I hope you will continue to do so.

The Voter Photo ID requirement is all about fair and accurate elections. The idea of showing a photo ID is familiar to every consumer, traveler, and citizen; many voters show their photo ID voluntarily at the polls. I support this bill because the integrity of our voter rolls and elections is imperative to our representative republic. Each and every vote matters; every illegitimate vote cancels out your legitimate vote. In fact, we recently had an election in Butler County that was so close that it was decided by a coin toss.

The PAC Check-off (Paycheck Protection) bill gives union members the freedom to direct political contributions to the candidate or cause of their choice and ends the practice of forcing members to contribute to causes or campaigns with which they may not agree. The procedure to retrieve the portion of union dues used to support political causes is often cumbersome and obscure. The recent use of intimidation and disruptive tactics as House members voted on this bill was unprecedented and disappointing and reflects, to a degree, what individual union members have endured when trying to prevent their dues from going to candidates or causes they do not wish to support.

Free market forces and the principle of limited government seem to clash in the issue of expanded alcohol sales. SB 54 would expand the sale of liquor to include grocery and convenience stores. Public safety issues and limiting minors' access to alcohol are valid concerns as well as the negative economic impact on small business retail liquor establishments. If SB 54

passes, there could literally be hard liquor on the shelf next to soft drinks at your local grocery store or WalMart. I don't see this as a positive change for our communities.

Another important bill that may not get out of Committee is the change in the selection process for Court of Appeals judges. HB 2101 would require Senate confirmation of candidates nominated by the Governor similar to the federal process. This bill eliminates the current nominating commission procedure that has stacked the court with activist judges.

As a member of the Commerce Committee, I have been reviewing expenditures by the Kansas BioScience Authority. As a result, I have been painfully reminded of personal experience that has taught me the need for sufficient accountability and oversight in financial and other matters. As many of you know, I have been working throughout the last four years to fully uncover and repair the damage caused by inadequate accountability and oversight procedures for my business that resulted in the financial collapse of my construction company. I have learned hard but valuable lessons in these trying economic times that have reinforced my understanding of the benefit of being financially frugal and ensuring proper oversight and accountability, especially with taxpayers' hard-earned money. Unlike some of the stereotypical, smoke and mirror maneuvers we've seen used by government officials, I've worked hard to maintain a transparent, open-book policy with this and other issues. I would be happy to discuss this with anyone who has additional questions or concerns.

Please stop by for a visit in Topeka (Room 541-S in the Capitol) or give me a call (785-296-7388) to share your opinions, ideas, and concerns. We are working through these challenging times together. Your opinions and suggestions are very helpful as we all make some hard choices in the days ahead.

*Ty Masterson*

*Senate District 16*