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Rep.Petty Responds To State Of The State Address

I had the honor of being sworn in as your next State Representative on Monday, January 14, in the House Chambers at the Kansas State Capitol in Topeka. It was a fun day and one I'll always remember, but on Tuesday it was time to get to work.

Governor Sam Brownback gave his State of the State Address to a joint session of the House and Senate last Tuesday evening. The Governor discussed the upcoming legislative session which included his proposals for a two year budget that includes tax reform. His proposal is to lower the income tax brackets to 1.9% on the low end and 3.5% on the high end with the eventual goal of getting income tax down to zero. However, the Governor's proposal includes keeping the one cent state sales tax in place that was set to expire this summer. This is an issue I would really like to hear from you the people. I believe that a sales tax is a more fair tax , however, I also know that businesses always like the prospect of lowering sales tax to possibly attract more customers.

Governor Brownback also discussed education and the recent decision by the Shawnee Court of Appeals who ruled that the legislature must increase the base state aid by at least $442 million. The Governor's recommendation is for the legislature to propose a constitutional amendment that would give the elected officials in the legislature the authority to decide what is proper funding for schools rather than un-elected judges. I strongly agree with the Governor on this. A stat that most Kansans don't know is that over 60% of the state budget goes toward education. This includes K-12, along with colleges and universities. If you just take K-12 it is around 51%. (Approx: $12,000 per student including state and federal funds). With this ruling, K-12 would go up to over 60% of the budget and education with colleges and universities would reach over 70% of the total budget which would cause the state to have to find around 10% of cuts from other services such as highways which none of us in Southwest Kansas want to see happen. If no cuts were made that would require a major tax increase, which is also something that most of us would not be in favor of. So it is very important that this decision be in the legislators hands who are elected. Not un-elected judges. The problem with education isn't funding. It is mismanagement of funds.

I was disappointed to see that the Governor's budget proposal includes transferring highway funds to another part of the budget. I sit on the Transportation Committee and during our meeting on Thursday, KDOT Secretary Mike King was there and he assured us that that money allotted for T-Works was not in jeopardy despite the proposal of the transfer of funds to another part of the budget. So that is good, however, I still do not agree with this move and hope the House budget won't include this transfer, but it is too early to know.

I will be in Liberal this Saturday, January 26, at Spencer Browne's from 9-11 a.m. I will be there to give updates on what is going on in Topeka, and to take questions. As always, you can email me at Reid.Petty@house.ks.gov.

Rep. Petty Press Release