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Update From Topeka With Sen. Garrett Love

After weathering two major snow storms and hours of floor debate, we reached the halfway point of the 2013 legislatiive session this past week, known as turnaround week. This is the point to which most bills have to pass the chamber it originated in. Committees had the opportunity to meet on Tuesday and Wednesday before we turned our focus to the turnaround deadline by spending all day Thursday on the Senate floor.

Upon our return on Wednesday after having a few days off to let the clerical staff finish processing everything from last week, the focus of the Senate will primarily be on legislation which passed the House that has made its way to our chamber. Over the next few weeks, you'll begin to see some of the more basic issues wrap up as the critical issues like budget and tax begin to take center stage.

As always, I'll keep you updated on the activities of the legislature while we continue through the second half of the session. Again, I encourage you to stay informed of the issues under consideration by the Kansas Legislature. Committee schedules, bills, and other helpful information can be easily accessed through the legislature's website at www.kslegislature.org. Please do not hesitate to contact me with your thoughts, concerns, and suggestions. Over the last few Saturdays, we held 15 townhalls across the district to do just that. I always appreciate hearing from my constituents on the topics under consideration and appreciate the perspective from those outside the Statehouse. Here are a couple of the bills we passed this week:

Drug Testing for Welfare Recipients (SB 149)
SB 149 sparked much debate in the Senate. It authorizes drug testing for recipients of welfare benefits when there is reasonable suspicion of the recipient using illegal drugs. For those who fail the drug test, assistance is suspended until they have completed drug rehabilitation and a job skills training program. A second failed drug test would require additional treatment and training program completion while suspending benefits for one year. Those who fail a third drug test would be permanently suspended from receiving assistance and benefits. SB 149 provides the help and services those struggling with drug addiction need. The legislation goes further than any other bill of its kind in the nation to provide such services. It also ensures that the children continue to receive needed benefits by allowing another individual to continue to receive benefits for the minors.

Removing the statute of limitations on rape (SB 167)
This week the Senate deliberated on a bill that would eliminate the statute of limitations for the crimes of rape or aggravated criminal sodomy. This change in current statue would permit the prosecution of extremely violent sex offenders to occur at any time. The bill also extends the reportable time period for underage victims of sexual assault that do not rise to the level of rape until the victim turns 28. SB 167 increases the statute of limitations for such sexual assault on adult victims from five to ten years. The bill preserves current law, which enables the prosecution of sex offenders any time law enforcement uncovers new DNA evidence linking a suspect to the sexual assault. Being a member of the Judiciary Committee, I heard from several victims of these horrible crimes urging this bills' passage. I am pleased to report it passed the Senate with strong support.

Please feel free to contact me with any thoughts, concerns or ideas you may have.
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