

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Friday, March 10, 2006

by State Representative David Osborne

State House passes budget, teacher pay increases included

On Tuesday of last week, the Kentucky State House of Representatives finished the first phase of the legislative budget process when we passed our version of the state budget.

Early last week we passed HB 380, the state budget, on a vote of 97-0. The two-year, \$18 billion spending plan provides funding for all state agencies as well as countless programs and services provided to our state's 4.2 million men, women and children. The plan also includes funding for a significant raise in teacher pay in an effort to compete with neighboring states by retaining our qualified teachers and attracting new educators to Kentucky classrooms.

House Bill 380 also provides an additional \$26 million towards the Support Education Excellence in Kentucky (SEEK) program used to fund public elementary and secondary schools. We were also able to dedicate \$34 million in additional dollars to fund full-day kindergarten across the state and increase our investment in low-income preschool. To ensure students get the most out of their classroom time, we allocated \$50 million in bond funds towards technology in our schools. I have filed two bills that would provide additional funding for high growth counties like Oldham.

Additional funding for higher education includes \$10 million in new benchmark funds to be distributed among all state universities and colleges. The state's two largest universities received funding to take them one step further in realizing our goal to make them nationally recognized for the education they offer. The House Budget dedicates \$9 million to the University of Kentucky and \$6 million towards the University of Louisville. The budget also includes investments in bricks and mortar projects on our university campuses, approximately \$500 million for various building projects for public universities is included in HB 380.

Our older Kentuckians received attention under a section of the budget that provides an additional \$3.5 million each year of the biennium to expand aging services like home health, personal care attendants and adult day care.

The budget also includes the 6-year road plan. Senator Harris and I have spent a tremendous amount of time working with and lobbying the Transportation Cabinet for inclusion of Oldham County projects. Our efforts have paid dividends by the inclusion of over \$80 million in county road projects.

I joined my fellow House members in voting for HB 272, a measure I cosponsored after being contact by constituents here in this district. HB 272 would require a driver involved in an automobile accident to move his or her vehicle off the roadway of interstate highways or parkways if the accident does not involve death or known or visible injury. HB 272, which passed 98-0, will improve road safety conditions along our interstates,

including right here in Oldham County. I wrote about this bill when I shared some of the issues before us since the U.S. Office of Highway Administration that as much as 20 percent of all traffic accidents occur in the traffic backup that results from previous accidents.

The House also passed child safety legislation that would require that children under 16 wear a helmet while riding all terrain vehicles (ATVs). As someone who values individual choice, this vote was a challenge. In the end, I had to consider a recent study by the University of Kentucky that stated that children under age 16 are more than five times more likely to sustain injuries in ATV crashes than older children or adults.

With fewer than four work weeks left in this session, I hope you will never hesitate to contact me regarding the work of the 2006 General Assembly. I can be reached here at home anytime, or through the toll-free message line in Frankfort at 1-800-372-7181. If you have internet access you can e-mail me at david.osborne@lrc.ky.gov or keep track through the Kentucky Legislature Home Page:<http://www.lrc.ky.gov>.

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