

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Friday, March 3, 2006

by State Representative David Osborne

House takes on sex offenders, violent crimes and energy issues

With 42 legislative days behind us and just over three weeks left in the 2006 General Assembly, last week was a busy week in the State Capitol Building.

No doubt one of the most important bills we voted on last week was legislation that would increase penalties and tighten registration requirements for sex offenders. Under the bill, all sex offenders would be prohibited from living within 1,000 feet of a school or public playground. Registration for some sex offenders would be increased from 10 years to 20 years. Sex offenders who move to Kentucky must register within five working days of their move or they would face felony charges.

House Bill 3, which I cosponsored, also takes exceptional strides at fighting child pornography, specifically by increasing penalties under the state's child pornography statutes and including the possession of child pornography as a Class D felony. Persistent felony offenders would face life in prison without parole for 25 years for sex crimes against children.

The sex offender legislation also tightens enforcement of early release programs by making it a Class D felony to tamper with monitoring devices they are ordered to wear as part of probation, parole or pretrial release. It was an honor to vote for this bill because I believe it will help keep Kentuckians of all ages, including our children, from falling prey to a sex offender.

Last week, I also had the opportunity to join my House colleagues in approving HB 585, a measure that would clarify the intention and language of an informed consent bill passed by the 1998 General Assembly. The original law requires women seeking an abortion to be presented with certain facts at least 24 hours before the procedure. Under the provisions of HB 585, a face to face consultation with a doctor, licensed nurse or social worker would be required before having an abortion.

I also joined fellow House members in voting for HB 435, a bill aimed at increasing live organ donation. Approximately 70 live organ donations were made last year, but the bill offers incentives that may provide potential donors with a way to help others without losing wages. The provisions of HB 435 include a tax credit and a state program that would cover lost wages or other unreimbursed costs related to the organ donation.

The House Tourism and Energy Committee passed HB 665, legislation that would specifically exempt from siting review and approval by the Kentucky State Board on Electric Generation and Transmission Siting a planned \$1 billion federal clean coal

demonstration plant known as FutureGen, which would employ advanced coal gasification and other technology to produce hydrogen and electricity from coal with virtually zero emissions and carbon capture for sequestration. With passage of this bill, Kentucky may be a candidate for the U.S. Department of Energy's proposed FutureGen project. According to the U.S. Department of Energy, the \$1 billion dollar project is intended to create the world's first zero-emissions fossil fuel plant. When operational, the prototype would be the cleanest fossil fuel fired power plant in the world.

Members of the House Health and Welfare Committee passed HB 622, a measure aimed at increasing consumer awareness of both the cost and quality of health care. If the measure becomes law, they would have to provide both the cost of services and quality outcomes — to the Cabinet for Health and Family Services for posting on its website. The bill was drafted with participation from the Kentucky Chamber of Commerce and Kentucky Hospital Association.

Over the next few weeks I hope to continue to update you on our progress as the 2006 General Assembly continues its work. In the meantime, I hope you will never hesitate to contact me to voice your opinion on an issue or receive more information about any of the bills before us this session. 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>.