

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

by State Representative David Osborne

April 7, 2006

Since my last writing, changes have been made to our legislative calendar that call for the General assembly to reconvene on April 10. Those plans also have the session adjourning sine die, or completely, on April 12.

While members of the free conference committee on the budget are expected to file their report on Monday, April 10, we have been reviewing preliminary reports of the state's two year, \$18 billion spending plan. According to those reports, the plan provides an historic pay increase for our educators, funding to improve our roads and bridges and funding to increase and improve the delivery of water and sewer projects throughout our county. As you can see, our goal was to take Kentucky one step further in becoming the type of place that people thrive, companies locate and home-grown businesses prosper. I will have a more complete update on the budget once we receive the final document.

Of course, the budget is not the only bill we worked on this session. As I write this update, the governor has signed 149 bills into law and is expected to sign more in the next few days.

Already, the governor has signed road safety legislation into law with HB 272 and SB 44. I am proud to have been a sponsor of HB272. Both bills require quick clearance of the vehicles involved in automobile accidents that did not involve fatalities or injuries, clearing our roadways and eliminating road hazards. In 2004, there were 133,718 automobile accidents on Kentucky roads and approximately 77 percent involved only property damage. By allowing these accidents to be quickly moved out of the way, we may avoid any additional accidents that may be the result of traffic congestion, secondary crashes and the risk to people standing outside of the vehicles at the accident site. While the number of secondary crashes here in Kentucky is unavailable, the Federal Highway Administration estimates the national figure to be around 20 percent of all motor vehicle accidents.

Another bill signed into law by the governor is HB 67, legislation that requires the State Medical Examiner's Office to report the total number of deaths related to illegal drugs, that is those where illegal drugs can be detected in the body. The new law also requires tracking of deaths caused by inappropriate use of prescription drugs, when indicated by history or autopsy. The law created by HB 67 also includes a section that requires the State Medical Examiner's Office to provide an annual report to the Justice Cabinet Secretary, including detailed information.

This bill is crucial to our attempts to fight illegal drug abuse within our commonwealth, bringing us one step closer to understanding the effects it has had on our quality of life as well as our death.

The governor has also signed landmark legislation that will allow the Ten Commandments and other historical documents to be posted in public

buildings statewide under the standards set by the United States Supreme Court. The legislation, HB 277, would allow state agencies, local governments and public schools to post the Ten Commandments and other religious materials as historic artifacts if they are displayed in a balanced, objective and not solely religious manner. In schools, religious materials could only be displayed as part of a non-devotional, academic course if approved by the school's governing body.

The measure would also require that the national motto "In God We Trust" be placed over the dais of the Speaker of the House similar in display to that in the U.S. House of Representatives. Additionally, it would require that a monument of the Ten Commandments that previously stood on the Capitol grounds be put back on the grounds next to a marker explaining the monument's legislative and judicial history. The monument was donated by the Honorable Order of Eagles and was removed several years ago.

House Bill 277 includes an emergency clause, a provision that requires the bill to take effect immediately. Without that emergency clause, bills take effect exactly 90 days after we adjourn this session, generally around July 15.

After we adjourn the 2006 General Assembly sine die, we will not reconvene in regular session again until January 2, 2007. Although we will not be in session, the 2006 Legislative Interim will be very busy as we prepare for the issues we are going to face next session. We must continue to build on this year's efforts to keep Kentucky the best place to live, work and raise a family.

Again I hope you will never hesitate to contact me if I can provide additional information on our work, to share your thoughts or regarding a state government matter. I can be reached at home or through the toll-free message line at 1-800-372-7181. The phone calls, emails and letters we receive throughout the year help give us a better idea of your priorities. This session alone our legislative toll-free message line logged over 138,000 phone calls from constituents throughout the state.