

March 19, 2015

What a difference a week can make! At 70 degrees and sunshine, it was very difficult not to be outside on beautiful Sunday afternoon. Now even though the showers have come, Spring is in the air--Hallelujah!!! And what a difference a week can make at the General Assembly! The pace is fast and furious as we have "kicked it up numerous notches" for lawmakers, lobby folk, visiting constituents, and department heads. One could get a speeding ticket in the hallways of Legislative Plaza as we attempt to make it to all the appointments, committee hearings and floor chambers on time!

On the Radar:

HB1049: Dunn Education Administration & Planning Subcommittee voted 7 to 1 to approve the "Tennessee Choice and Opportunity Scholarship Act" otherwise known as school vouchers, which would give parents of disadvantaged students the option of sending their child to a school of their choice. This bill now travels to the full standing committee. If passed, the legislation would have an initial cap of 5,000 participants in its first year of implementation, expanding each year to a maximum of 20,000 students statewide in the fourth year.

HB1372: Holt "Tennessee Freedom from Traffic Cameras Act" got a 6 to 2 green light in Transportation Sub. The bill bans cities from deploying any additional red-light and traffic cameras in their areas and calls for a wind-down of any current contracts in place. Supporters feel the cameras infringe on the "innocent until proven guilty" principle and are merely a scheme for revenue that is often sent to out-of-state and third party companies. Currently across the state, 24 towns and cities have installed speed- and red-light cameras. Bill has now passed full committee. Where do you stand on these onerous little devices? Your comments would be greatly appreciated.

HB1341: Weaver To be heard in Civil Subcommittee, this bill applies to FUTURE federal gun laws by simply drawing a line in the sand. It is based on a well-established legal doctrine known as the Anti Commandeering Doctrine *Printz vs. US*. The bill just says TN is not going to spend state resources by enforcing a standard federal policy or executive order the General Assembly has not adopted. This bill does not interfere or conflict with any current federal gun laws (background checks, existing bans, gun-free school zones, etc.).

Since my freshman year when the fabulous folks of the fortieth sent me to Nashville to represent them, I have served on Transportation; it is a committee of great importance to me. In order to keep Tennessee moving forward, we must have exceptional roads and safe, structurally sound bridges in order to keep commerce moving in and through our great state. Tennesseans need passage to work that is safe, efficient and connects even our most rural areas to cities and towns where employment awaits them. County tags of district 40 are well-represented on Interstate 40, going east towards Nashville, Monday thru Friday.

TDOT Revenue Sources for FY 2015 totals \$1.840 Billion - \$822 Million are state funds - \$42 Million are local funds and \$976 Million are in federal funding. We still rank second in the nation with the best roads, Idaho being first, and the worst being District of Columbia, AND we top the nation with NO transportation debt. Ninety percent of monies spent go back to our communities for construction maintenance and grants. There is much discussion on the "HOW" we are going to fund the transportation needs going forward. While there are some voices who favor raising the gas tax, I am finding an overwhelming voice against such measures. One can also observe from the lack of support from the US Senate and House of Representatives, that a gas tax increase is not on the horizon. So if that be the case, perhaps we, the states, must reconsider the way we pay for transportation. We, the states, must have a plan with regard to the uncertain prospects of the feds NOT funding the states, and become less dependent on federal aid. Tennessee can take the lead on a Transportation Fund Reform, because we have, over the years, been such an excellent steward and will continue to do so much with so little. Something to think about!

Cal Thomas, one of my favorite columnists, commented: "At least half of our nation has chosen to trade liberty for a long list of handouts, which is leading to social decay. By returning to common sense and the nation's founding principles, the decline of America can be prevented." I say Amen and Salute!

Blessings,
Terri Lynn