

June 3, 2011 - The "Loop" Part 1

We wrapped up one of the most successful legislative sessions in the State's history. If I could use two words to describe the first half of the 107th, that would be productive and efficient. In a nutshell, we balanced a budget that contained no tax increases and reduced Tennessee's overall spending by \$1.4 billion over last year. We restored \$70.4 million to the Rainy Day Fund for the first time in three years and allocated \$71.3 million for disaster relief resulting from the recent storms and flooding plus we even were able to give a pay increase to our state employees, the first in three years.

With top priority being focused on job creation, it was an honor to be part of this assembly. Hats off to the "Jobs4TN plan" and the blueprint to that objective, bringing jobs to Tennessee. It is imperative we keep this state a friendly atmosphere for not only the businesses already here but also for those looking to come to Tennessee. We as a state must assist existing business to grow and yes make a profit. That being said I believe wholeheartedly government doesn't create jobs business does. It's the profitable and thriving small businesses that generate job creation and job growth. By reducing regulations, coupled with our geographic location, being a strong right-to-work state, and no state income tax there is no reason why Tennessee can not be the number one place in the Southeast for high-quality jobs. Add also the fact we have placed a dynamic economic development vision needed in order for Tennessee to improve unemployment, especially in rural counties such as mine. We are accomplishing much however there is still much to do. That chapter will continue when we resume in January.

In closing, it is sad to say that there are people who make their living off of the backs of small businesses throughout the state by way of frivolous lawsuits.

Common sense legislation was passed that places caps on non-economic damage awards at \$750,000 and at \$1 million in cases where victims suffer certain catastrophic injuries, I believe this reform will drastically improve the business prospects for Tennessee by leveling the playing field so our state is more competitive with other States in the region. Folks these are all necessary ingredients for Tennessee to win when it comes to keeping and bringing jobs to the Volunteer State.

Again I thank you for giving me the opportunity to serve and work for you. It is work worth doing!

Blessings,