

November 17, 2011

Greetings! Since hearing about the waiver request our Governor and the Commissioner of Education put in motion here of late, I applaud this move forward from the many rules connected with No Child Left Behind and the plain unattainable unreachable goals required by this federal mandate. This ten-year-old process is now a hindrance to real reform in our state. What Tennessee wants is an accountability system with “ambitious but achievable goals that primarily focuses on overall school growth. We want our own way of measuring high and low performing schools.” This can be accomplished and better done as we put the control back in the state and in our local school districts. With one more day to go visiting the schools of my district, the feedback from principles and administrators remains positive as we continue to work out the glitches in education reform.

Governors in southern states met in Nashville the other day to discuss how to bring manufacture back to the states. The weakness of the dollar coupled by the high cost of shipping along with the wage gap that is shrinking as wages in China increase, Governor Haslam believes we must be aggressive in bringing companies back to the U.S. As states compete in a very competitive environment for jobs, the 107th General Assembly is doing just that. Setting the stage to attract new business, help existing ones and create more jobs. Passing torte reform legislation last year that put a \$250,000 cap on lawsuits, abuse in Tennessee will decline and that is another tool in our toolbox for economic growth here in our state. A continued focus on limited workers compensation claims, cutting business regulations and staying the course with our low tax base on property and corporate taxes is the recipe for jobs to the volunteer state. Next session, which resumes on January 10, will be another productive one indeed!

The state of Tennessee is truly blessed to have such fine Constitutional Officers. Having had the Comptroller in my district last month, Justin Wilson, it was an honor to have our State Treasurer David Lillard with me this past week. Meeting with Bankers, Doctors, Dentists, small business owners, farmers and leadership groups, the big topic was the state BUDGET and how it effects all the above. This years budget decisions are going to be tough whether you are making cuts from a state perspective or your kitchen table. That is why it is vital to have people at the helm that can steer through this storm whose mindset is to live within the means by cutting expenditures till we have a consistent revenue increase.

As we approach next week’s favorite Holiday of mine, I pray that we count our blessings, for a grateful heart is a compassionate heart. Be an extension of grace towards others as we gather around the table with friends and family.

Happy Thanksgiving!