

## Representative Jeff Kaufmann – May 10,2007

Here is my last weekly column in case you missed it in the newspapers. Any questions or comments let me know. Jeff

### **Your Capitol Voice (Representative Jeff Kaufmann)**

Someone asked me the other day what grade I would give the 2007 legislative session. My students say I am a tough grader, but I think I can justify a grade of C-. This could be raised or lowered depending on next session. Allow me to present to you my opinion of the highlights and disappointments of the session. In fairness, I present eight of each:

#### **Highlights**

- The emphasis on future technology by our new Power Fund: cellulose-based fuel, biomass, clean-coal, wind, ethanol, and biodiesel will mean less dependence on foreign oil.
- More competitive teacher salaries and more options for school districts to share resources.
- The Values Fund helped to bring great projects to Durant and West Branch with the potential for more throughout the 79th District.
- We rewrote our flag desecration laws to continue to honor our national symbol and we said “no” to attempts by the ACLU to eliminate our law.
- Association health care plans passed the legislature and will help stabilize insurance rate increases for some businesses. More comprehensive reform is needed and if this is all we do then I would move this bill to the disappointment category.
- More dollars to community colleges and universities should address tuition costs. After this session’s investment, tuition increases beyond the rate of inflation are not acceptable or defensible.
- Threats to weaken last year’s property rights law did not gain support.
- The state minimum wage was raised. I believe it should have been paired with some relief (health care, property tax) for small business.

#### **Disappointments**

- Efforts to make the 1 cent penny for schools statewide stalled in a fog of misinformation and Senate mistakes. This would have yielded significant property tax relief and dollars for our schools.
- Attempts at commercial property tax relief failed with yet another planned study. The solutions are there, we need the political will.
- Nothing was done with our sex offender laws. Most agree that they should be focused on offenders that pose a danger to our children.
- Help to our local fire firefighters and EMS volunteers could have and should have been much more.
- The Veterans Trust Fund was under funded by 5 million. During a time of increased revenues, this is not acceptable.

- Increased resources for stem cell research are positive, but lifting the ban on therapeutic human cloning and failing to prevent the sale of human eggs was a big disappointment.
- Tobacco tax revenues should have been exclusively devoted to health care. This did not happen.
- With a 9-11% increase in state spending and over 600 million dollars in built-in spending for next year, we are placing ourselves in a dangerous financial situation. If not remedied this will result in budget cuts or tax increases when the economy slows

It is truly a pleasure to serve all of you and I look forward to hearing from you throughout the summer and fall. I now add teaching and farming to the "hats that I wear," and reintroduce myself to my family. I have been speaking and visiting all over the District. If you would like me to speak to your group, classroom, or meeting, just let me know.

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Thank you for this opportunity.