

Guest Editorial

(Owen/Grant/Scott)

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Commonwealth of Kentucky
Senator Damon Thayer

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Report from Frankfort

Frankfort – After being honored to be chosen as a member of the escort committee as Governor Ernie Fletcher entered the House of Representatives to deliver his budget address, I listened closely to his message. While I am pleased that he offered a balanced budget without tax increases, I will also be looking carefully at the details. I am committed to adequately funding education and making sure our most vulnerable citizens are taken care of. In the coming weeks, I anticipate receiving the House's budget proposal and then the Senate's real work will begin.

The Senate passed several good government bills emphasizing efficiency and targeting waste this week. I want to be able to protect your tax-dollars and make sure that they are invested wisely.

Two of the most significant bills were Senate Bill 55 and Senate Bill 40. SB 40, which passed unanimously, targets Medicaid waste by allowing the Department for Medicaid Services to identify Medicaid recipients whose usage of controlled substances may be more appropriately managed by a single outpatient pharmacy or primary care physician. The typical Medicaid patient prescriptions here in Kentucky are more than double the national average. This bill will help us not only better care for our needy but also identify those unscrupulous individuals who are taking advantage of the Medicaid system.

SB 55 establishes reporting requirements for federal homeland security funding received by state and local public agencies. With heightened security issues, Kentucky has received many grants and monies from the federal government. We must have a way to track these dollars and make sure they are being used effectively. The Adjutant General will also be required to submit a homeland security report annually.

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SB 14 also passed the Senate this week. The Kentucky All Schedule Prescription Electronic Reporting (KASPER) is a model program that other states have copied. KASPER tracks prescription drug dispensing across the state, and requires doctors and pharmacists to supply utilization data. Currently, law enforcement agencies are not allowed to share KASPER reports with other law enforcement agencies. SB 14 enhances KASPER so that law enforcement can more closely monitor the illegal diversion of prescription drugs.

This week, I also co-sponsored SB 110 which will allow local governments to spend surplus revenue from the 911 tax for necessary equipment and supplies, in addition to communications services. This bill makes sense because it allows these important emergency personnel to upgrade their equipment with funds that are already present.

One-third of the 2004 General Assembly is now over. As we delve further into the budget process and help provide thoughtful solutions to the Commonwealth's problems, your input is very important. Please call me at 800/372-7181 and let me know what's important to you.

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Note: For a high-resolution .jpeg of Senator Thayer, please log onto www.lrc.state.ky.us/pubinfo/epphoto.htm.