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LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

By State Representative Ron Crimm

Numerous Legislative Initiatives Under Consideration As First Month Ends

With the first full month of the 2010 General Assembly behind us, my colleagues and I are working to move legislation through the committee process and to the full House to give each measure enough time for debate and passage.

Measures heard in committee this week include House Bill 10, which was approved by the House Appropriations and Revenue Committee. A community rehabilitation tax credit would be created for a nonprofit agency or work center that employs individuals who are legally blind or severely disabled. This would move Kentucky one step closer towards removing the stigma that a disability prevents a person from being a valuable and contributing member of his or her community.

The House Education Committee gave overwhelming passage to legislation addressing early education assessment and invention this week. House Bill 109 would require public schools to provide screenings to each student, kindergarten through the third grade, to determine if the child has a learning disability.

Despite objections from many of my fellow caucus members, the House Transportation Committee gave approval to House Bill 43, legislation that would ban all drivers from texting while operating a vehicle. We are all aware of the horrors that can occur from an accident that stems from distracted driving. While I agree with the intent of legislation, I am troubled by some of the provisions which would allow exemptions for certain groups without reason. Before I can vote in favor of this legislation, I will need to see the gray areas more clearly defined.

Kentucky National Guard Members who were injured while on active duty would receive military pay during their rehabilitation through House Bill 237. Passed by the Military Affairs and Public Safety Committee, this legislation would provide immediate relief to our service members if signed into law.

The House Elections, Constitutional Amendments and Intergovernmental Affairs Committee moved to strengthen campaign finance laws by easily approving House Bill 214. Under this measure, candidates would be prohibited from accepting loans in an attempt to skirt the \$1,000

contribution limit. This bill does not restrict the amount of personal money a candidate can spend on his or her campaign, including loaning the campaign personal funds.

House Bill 41, legislation which would offer patient care protection during disputes between healthcare providers and insurance companies, passed the House by a vote of 96-0. The bill would require a contract between a hospital and an insurer to run for at least three years and stipulate that a hospital must provide an insurance company six months' notice before ending a contract. It also sets procedures to determine benefits for patients receiving treatment if an insurer and a hospital sever relations.

House Bill 201 was approved without a dissenting vote. Should it become law, this legislation will require all newly selected water district commissioners to complete an instructional course within a year of their appointments. Additionally, the Public Service Commission would be granted permission to fill a Rural Water District position vacant for more than 90 days due to an unexpired term.

A General Assembly Green Schools Caucus was created under House Resolution 24. Adopted 97-0, this new group pledges to support the creation of healthy, environmentally friendly schools statewide. Green schools are defined as facilities that are energy efficient, water efficient, environmentally sustainable, designed to improve learning and save school districts money.

We still have many important issues to address, including the state budget. The budget review subcommittees are currently deliberating the governor's proposal, which provides funding for state services for the next two years. Once the subcommittees finish their work, the budget will then be sent to the Appropriations and Revenue Committee before coming to the House floor.

In the meantime, I will continue to update you on the work of the 2010 General Assembly. As always, I can be reached at home anytime, or through the toll-free message line in Frankfort at 1-800-372-7181. Those with hearing impairments may leave messages for me by calling the TTY message Line at 1-800-896-0305. If you have internet access, you can e-mail me at ron.crimm@lrc.ky.gov or keep track through the Kentucky Legislature's Home Page: <http://www.lrc.ky.gov>.

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