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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**LEGISLATIVE UPDATE**

By State Representative Ron Crimm

## **Budget negotiations begin this week in a race against the clock**

Crafting a budget from two vastly differing pieces of legislation is a difficult process in itself. Coupling that process with a limited amount of time is the situation in which members of the bipartisan, bicameral conference committee on House Bill 290 now find themselves as the end of this 60-day session draws near. The conference committee, which has been meeting since Mar. 24, is expected to work throughout the weekend in hopes of negotiating a compromise amenable to both chambers before we adjourn for the 10-day veto period.

Meanwhile, the House Licensing and Occupations Committee approved Senate Bill 123, a measure providing the Kentucky State Police another tool to combat theft. This legislation would require pawnbrokers to share information about individuals who bring in items to pawn with the state police through an accessible database. This information could provide the officers with leads if items were found to have been stolen.

Senate Bill 4 addresses the topic of organ donation and, with passage from the House, moves Kentucky one step closer to adopting clear, coordinated organ donation plans. Should this measure become law, the method in which organ donors or their families could make a donation would be clarified and Kentuckians would have the ability to explicitly refuse to donate. Further provisions state that care, food, and water cannot be withheld to accelerate a death for organ donation.

Minimal debate, mixed with some members' caution, yielded the 80-16 passage of legislation that would exempt qualified noncommercial billboards on private property from state permitting requirements. This legislation also stipulates that a commercial message is one that advertises the sale of products or services for hire.

Legislation that would expand Kentucky's monthly service charge for wireless connections to commercial mobile radio, wireline, and other communication services passed the House 99-0. Any revenue generated by House Bill 462 would be governed by the Kentucky 911 Emergency Communications Authority, which would also be established under this measure. While the authority would not have the ability to increase the 70-cent surcharge, they would be given the right to decrease the fee.

Senate Bill 17 passed the House by a vote of 97-0 and would make it a Class C felony for workers at Kentucky's prisons, jails, or detention centers to have sex with inmates. Additionally, the measure would expand the definition of misdemeanor second-degree sexual abuse to include sexual contact between inmates and jailers, employees, contractors, vendors, or volunteers of the Department of Juvenile Justice. This legislation now awaits the Governor's signature into law

We also voted on legislation that would permit a portion of the school superintendent evaluation process to be held in a private session. In order to encourage openness and sincerity from a school district's highest-ranking official, Senate Bill 178, approved 67-29, would allow all preliminary evaluations involving school boards and superintendents to be closed to the public. However, the board could still choose to hold these sessions publicly, as is the current practice.

The Senate returned House Bill 1, a measure to help protect domestic violence victims, to our chamber with a committee substitute that would require the state police to perform federal background checks for civil domestic violence cases. Due to legality concerns, the House refused to concur with that change, and this legislation will be heard by a conference committee.

On Thursday of this week, I proudly joined with House Republican Caucus members for a press conference in which our

Floor Leader Jeff Hoover renewed his call to Attorney General Jack Conway to join 13 other Attorneys General throughout the nation in challenging the constitutionality of the federal health care reform legislation that has been signed into law. It is our belief this legislation unconstitutionally requires every American to purchase health insurance, regardless of age, income or circumstance. It also places an undue burden on our Commonwealth's already strained budget by forcing the expansion of Medicaid. We believe that General Conway, as the Commonwealth's chief legal officer, should carry out his duties and challenge the constitutionality of a mandate that will place a population-based tax on states. Unfortunately, he has again chosen to reject our call, placing politics over the well being of the citizens of Kentucky.

With less than a week remaining in this legislative session, the following days promise to hold the passage of many key bills affecting various segments of our Commonwealth. I encourage you to keep up-to-date by calling 1-800-633-9650 for the legislative committee meeting schedule and 1-866-840-2835 to check the status of any bill. You may contact me directly at home, through the toll-free message line at 1-800-372-7181, or via e-mail at [ron.crimm@lrc.ky.gov](mailto:ron.crimm@lrc.ky.gov).

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