

Smith, Stivers talk through 2025 legislative session

BY CHARLES MYRICK
 State Representative Tom O'Dell Smith, who represents all of Knox County and part of Laurel County, spoke with Nolan Group Media CEO Jay Nolan recently about legislation passed during the most recent session for the Kentucky legislature. In addition to his elected position, Smith serves on various committees at the state capitol, such as the Vice Chair of the License and Occupation committee, serving on the Banking and Insurance committee, Natural Resources, recently appointed to the Subcommittee on Transportation that deals with the budget, as well as the Investigative and Oversight committee.
 Also present for the interview

was Senate President Robert Stivers. Both men spoke to the results of the recent legislative session. "It turned out very good," Stivers said. "...I think it was one of the better sessions we've had about communications between the House and the Senate."
 "We met weekly," he added, "to see what was on each other's radar and priorities... they had good discussions with our Democrat colleagues in the Senate Chamber, and I understand to the extent in the House Chamber, so from a communication standpoint and passing the bills that we really emphasized or wanted to emphasize, we got those done."
 "I'm not really policy driven... I pay attention to the needs

of the area," Smith said, citing such needs as roads and infrastructure projects. "On the policy side... we came back in and tried to help some of our schools with discipline problems and attendance... a lot of things we find out that for schools takes up oxygen in the room," he said. "When we're discussing, 'How can we make them better?' and I think we had a couple of good House bills... they had some good Senate bills."
 An issue of importance to both men was the issue of transgender rights in relation to school policies and regulations. Smith said the national issue trickles down to local constituents who often ask what Kentucky legislators are going to do about it. "I'll speak

for our caucus, and I'm sure the President (Stivers) speak for us, there's not anybody in there with a hatred when they go in to discuss those lifestyles," Smith said, "and I'll assure you that I'm in the room. I will say this, the concern is with children, and that goes to school that goes to boys not going into girls bathrooms and locker rooms. Those things seemed like a minute (problem) when we were growing up, but they become serious..."
 When asked about lobbying groups trying to sway votes on various issues, Smith acknowledged their presence, but the voices of local people were pre-dominate and he concentrates on what issues are going to do to our local area, while also ac-

knowledging Stivers has to consider the entire state when dealing with issues and lobbyists.
 Both Stivers and Smith addressed income tax, which has been lowered a half-percent-age point annually, and will do so until the state income tax is completely eliminated. The current four percent rate will be cut to three and a half percent. "Our ultimate goal is to be as low and competitive as possible so people keep more money in their pockets," Stivers said. "The other part of this and and we did a lot of things to deal with statewide."
 Additional funding was allocated for teachers and state retirees, indicating a commitment to enhancing educational resources.

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April 10, 2025

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