

# THE ADVOCATE

A WEEKLY UPDATE  
FROM THE KANSAS  
LEGISLATURE

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## Intro

We are off and running in this 2025 Legislative Session. This session marks the first year of the biennium, meaning a fresh start with no bills carried over from the last session. All 165 members of the legislature, including eight new senators and twenty-five new representatives, were sworn in on Monday. Republicans gained three seats in the House, increasing their majority to an 88-37 advantage, with 84 votes required to override the Governor's veto power. The Senate flipped two seats to the GOP, representing a 31-9 margin, with 27 votes required to override a veto.

The new members will have to be brought up to speed quickly, as the session calendar is now limited to 90 calendar days, differing from the 90 session days that had been used in the past. This cuts the legislative session by a few weeks and has lobbyists and legislators alike hustling to schedule hearings on their issues before session deadlines. The turnaround deadline is February 20th, the last day for non-exempt bills to pass through their original chamber, and the legislature is scheduled to adjourn sine die on April 12.

Most committees spent last week making introductions, reviewing committee rules, and hearing agency updates. Committee work will begin in earnest this week after the MLK Holiday, but significant bills introduced last week in committees are noted below

## State of the State

Before Governor Kelly (D) gave her 7th State of the State address on Wednesday, Kansas Adjutant General Michael Venerdi gave the first State of the Military address. In it, he highlighted the importance of occupational licensing compacts for military families and advocated for federal funding for unmanned drones for the Kansas National Guard. Chief Justice Marla Luckert gave the annual State of the Judiciary address, in which she sounded the alarm on growing inequities in access to representation as the state faces a shortage of attorneys, especially in rural areas.

In her speech, Governor Kelly took a long-term approach, addressing issues she believes are vital to the state in the coming decades. Her usual pitch for Medicaid expansion was included, along with plans to increase access to childhood services and invest in school lunches for economically challenged children. The Governor also proposed a new agency, the Office of Natural Resources, which would align the efforts of the current 14 different agencies overseeing the state's water supply. While leaving the door open for reduced taxes, she promised to veto any tax cuts she deems "reckless" along with any efforts for school choice. In the Republican response, Senate President Ty Masterson (R-Andover) said the legislature would be taking up both issues, with plans to cut property taxes and support school choice.

## Budget

The Governor released her budget on Thursday following the State of the State address. It calls for \$10.6B in SGF spending but is essentially flat, only 0.7% higher than last year.

The legislature has taken a different approach to crafting the budget this year, preparing its own version instead of waiting for the Governor's recommendation in bill form, with work beginning in a newly created interim committee last year. Although crafted in advance, the budget chairs have given their word to consider the Governor's recommendations. The legislature's budget has been introduced as HB2007 and will be worked by House Appropriations before being turned over to the Senate ahead of turnaround. However, some committee members have voiced confusion about the process thus far. Rep. Troy Waymaster (R-Bunker Hill), Chair of House Appropriations, has also asked agencies to identify 7.5 percent in potential budget cuts lawmakers can consider during the budget process, as estimates show the state could burn through its surplus by the end of fiscal year 2029. These proposed cuts would not touch the education budget or Medicaid funding

Some highlights of the Governor's budget include:

### **Education and early childhood**

- \$72.6 million in special education funding, continuing planned phase-in
- \$10 million investment in cybersecurity for state colleges and universities
- \$10 million for childcare capacity accelerator grants
- \$5.5 million to eliminate copays for reduced price school lunches

### **Health and human services**

- Medicaid expansion, which the Governor says it save Kansas \$78.3 million in FY 26
- \$22.8 million (all funds) for Frail/Elderly, Brain Injury, and Technology Assistance waivers
- \$20 million for Home and Community Based Services provider grants

### **Water**

- \$35 million to Water Plan Fund
- \$30 million from Stabilization Fund interest for short term projects

Introduced bills of note:

SB14 - Providing for continuous state budgets until amended, lapsed or eliminated by the legislature, temporary reallocations and establishing conditions and limitations

## **Tax**

The Senate Tax Committee got off to a hot start, holding the only major bill hearing last week with SCR1603 on Thursday. The Senate Concurrent Resolution would limit residential, commercial, agricultural, and utility classes to 3% increases on their real property tax valuation liability via a constitutional amendment. While much of the state is eager to see property tax relief, and several proponents were present, opponents testified there are significant concerns with the SCR, including that it would create a tax shift onto commercial, agricultural, and utility classifications and result in businesses paying a more significant portion of the property tax burden. Others are concerned it would cause further stagnation in the housing market, with potential home buyers hesitant to see their property taxes increase by moving, as well as the inability to adjust in the future by having to run another constitutional amendment. Although the Senate committee favors the measure and plans to work the bill on Tuesday, members of the House have shared concerns. The Kansas Livestock Association and Kansas Farm Bureau were among in-person opponents. On the House side, Tax Chairman Adam Smith (R-Weskan) has proposed his idea for tax relief in RS0336, which would lower the state mill levy from 20 to 18.5, a number close to those brought in last year's tax cut packages which the Governor vetoed.

Introduced bills of note:

HB2001 - Continuing the reimbursement from the taxpayer notification costs fund for printing and postage costs of county clerks through calendar year 2029.

HB2005 - Establishing the veterans' valor property tax relief act providing an income tax credit or refund for eligible individuals.

HB2013 - Discontinuing the imposition of sales tax on cable, community antennae and television services.

SB25 - Enacting the insurance savings account act, allowing individuals and corporations to establish insurance savings accounts with certain financial institutions, providing eligible expenses, requirements and restrictions for such accounts and establishing addition and subtraction modifications under the Kansas income tax act

## Health

Introduced bills of note:

SB3/HB2002 - Requiring the department of health and environment to audit hospital compliance with the lay caregiver act and report the results of such audit to the legislature

SB11 - Requiring the state 911 board to establish requirements for 911 telecommunicators to receive training and continuous education in telecommunicator-cardiopulmonary resuscitation.

SB19 - Enacting the conscientious right to refuse act to prohibit discrimination against individuals who refuse medical care and creating a civil cause of action based on such discrimination and revoking the authority of the secretary of health and environment to quarantine individuals and impose associated penalties.

SB31 - Updating certain provisions of the Kansas dental practices act relating to dentist information requested by patients, in-person practice requirements in dental office using licensee's name, unprofessional conduct and patient complaints.

## Elections

Introduced bills of note:

SB4/HB2017 - Requiring the return of advance voting ballots by 7:00 p.m. on the day of the election.

SB5 - Prohibiting the use of funds provided by the United States government for the conduct of elections and election-related activities unless approved by the legislature

SB6 - Prohibiting the use of ranked-choice voting methods for conducting elections.

HB2018 - Prohibiting the disqualification of active military members, spouses or other dependents as poll workers by county election officers on the basis of residency or registered voter status.

HB2019 - Authorizing the board of county commissioners to appoint a person to fill a vacancy in a county-elected office when no candidate runs for such office.

HB2020 - Requiring a monthly report from the director of the division of vehicles listing the names and addresses of certain noncitizens who have been issued a driver's license during such month.

HB2022 - Clarifying that a special election shall not be held within 45 days before or after a general or primary election.

HB2021 - Authorizing the secretary of state, in consultation with county election officers, to adopt rules and regulations for the use of remote ballot boxes.

HB2023 - Creating the election crime of interference with an election official

## Local Government

Introduced bills of note:

SB37/HB2025 - Repealing the three-mile extraterritorial planning and zoning authority for cities.

## Welfare

Introduced bills of note:

HB2015 - Directing the secretary for children and families to request a waiver from supplemental nutrition assistance program rules that would allow the state to prohibit the purchase of candy and soft drinks with food assistance

HB2027 - Reorganizing subsections of the public assistance statute

## Finance

Introduced bills of note:

SB16 - Prohibiting discrimination by financial services companies on the basis of social credit score and requiring registered investment advisers to obtain written consent from clients prior to investing client moneys in mutual funds, equity funds, companies and financial institutions that engage in ideological boycotts.

## Important Dates

Important Dates:

February 5th - Last day for individuals to introduce bills

February 7th - Last day for non-exempt committees to introduce bills

February 17th - Last day for committees to meet before Turnaround Day

February 20th – (Turnaround) Last day for non-exempt bills to pass original chamber

## The Week Ahead

The following bills are scheduled to receive hearings this week.

Thursday, January 23

1:30 PM House Higher Ed Budget

Community College, Tech College, and Private College Budgets

1:30 PM House Social Services Budget

Hearing on: Public Testimony for Kansas Department for Children and Families

## **Helpful Links to Monitor the Action**

[Listen](#) live to committee hearings or playback past hearings.

[Watch](#) the House and Senate floor debates via YouTube.

[Find](#) the daily calendars.

[Search](#) for a bill.

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