

THE ADVOCATE

A WEEKLY UPDATE
FROM THE KANSAS
LEGISLATURE

ADVOCACY THAT WORKS

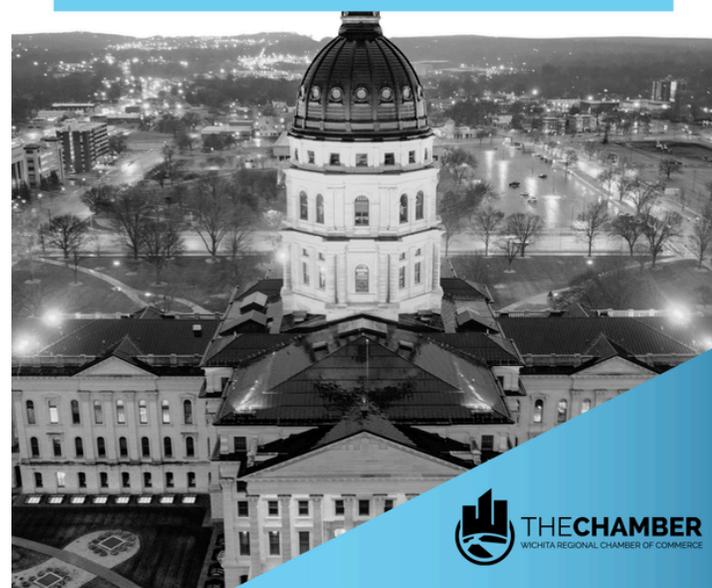


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WICHITA REGIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

2026 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA



Intro

The Kansas legislature continues to hurtle toward deadlines at a breakneck pace. With another week in the books, we stand less than one month away from first adjournment, scheduled to take place on March 27.

The legislature took Monday off last week, giving the revisors time to recover from the hectic turnaround week, where well over one hundred bills were passed through various chambers. The members returned from the floor to their normal committee work, though there was less action in the House committees, since the Senate sent over fewer bills. Still, there was major action this week, as both chambers took up their respective property tax proposals and the House passed its version of the budget, along with an extension of the STAR Bond program.

Property Tax Legislation Moves

It appears a majority of legislators believe a comprehensive property tax strategy is necessary. How they arrive at that solution is the question as the House and Senate both have their own plans. Legislative leadership agreed to have both chambers run the other's respective property tax plans, with Speaker Dan Hawkins (R-Wichita) saying they will "give them an honest shot."

The Senate passed its proposal, [SCR1616](#), the constitutional amendment to cap assessed value increases to 3%, by a vote of 30-10. Being a resolution, it requires a two-thirds majority to pass and is not subject to a veto by the governor. Meanwhile, the House plan, [HB2745](#), underwent major changes on the floor. Originally, the bill would have instituted a soft cap of 3% on property tax receipts, requiring an election to approve increases in property tax revenues for the next year. This was amended to a protest petition requiring 10% of the voters in the previous presidential election to succeed by the House Tax committee. It would also have established a \$60 million property tax relief fund to distribute to counties that limit property tax increases. On the House Floor, the bill's property tax relief fund was removed in an amendment brought by Rep. Kristey Williams (R-Augusta), and the requirement to gather 10% of electors' signatures for the protest petition was lowered to 5% of the voters in the previous Secretary of State election in an amendment brought by Rep. Shannon Francis (R-Liberal). After the adoption of those amendments, the bill passed by a vote of 76-45, which would not overturn a veto should Governor Laura Kelly decide to do so.

The future of both pieces of legislation remains to be seen. There was strong opposition to the passage of [HB2745](#) by the municipalities in the House Committee on Taxation. This echoes the similar [HB2396](#) from last year, which passed in the House but ultimately did not make it through the Senate. Furthermore, while the Chairman of House Tax Adam Smith (R-Weskan) is passionate about property tax relief, he has not been shy about his dislike of [SCR1616](#).

House Passes STAR Bond Extension

Most of the recent conversation around the STAR Bond program has been related to the monumental deal the state struck to land the Kansas City Chiefs, with plans for a domed stadium, as well as the team's headquarters, practice field, and a mixed-use development district. The incentive program has also been used to bring major developments to Kansas, such as a Mattel theme park, the Legends, the Kansas Speedway, and many more projects across the state.

However, the successful program currently stands to sunset at the end of the fiscal year. After being passed out of the House Committee on Commerce, Labor, and Economic Development, the substitute for [SB197](#) was debated on the House floor last week. The bill would extend the sunset on STAR Bonds to 2031, allowing more tourist-attracting projects to be funded using the unique mechanism. The bill would also set requirements on how many outside visitors the projects need to attract, allow redevelopment of malls, and other smaller provisions.

The bill was amended on the House floor so that when new projects are bonded in an existing district where the bonds have paid off, they will use a new tax increment base rather than the original base. The amended bill passed by a vote of 82-38, though it was discovered that the drafting of the amendment results in unintended consequences that will need to be addressed in conference committee.

Kansas Strikes a Deal on SNAP Data

A major piece of contention in the budget process this year has been the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. Significant changes have been made by the new federal administration and H.R.1, the One Big Beautiful Bill Act. One change was a shift in administrative costs, moving the formula from 50-50 to 75-25, with the state paying 75% of the administrative costs.

Additionally, the Governor, Attorney General, and federal government have been locked in a battle over the use of SNAP recipients' personal data. The federal government requested the data to share with other agencies, but the Kansas Department of Children and Families rejected the request, citing privacy concerns. Democratic Governor Laura Kelly entered into a legal battle with Republican Attorney General Kris Kobach, who sued in an attempt to force the state to turn over the data to the federal government. Republican legislators were concerned that if the state did not turn over the data, they would be out of compliance with the federal program and would lose tens of millions, as was threatened by the US Department of Agriculture last year. With a large deficit already looming, they did not want to have to backfill the program with significant State General Fund dollars.

On Friday, Feb. 27, Governor Laura Kelly's office announced that it had reached a deal with the USDA regarding the data. Gov. Kelly held up the agreement as a win for Kansans' privacy, saying she secured safeguards on the data. State Republican leadership disputed that, saying that she "folded." Either way, with the dispute resolved, the state is no longer at risk of losing federal funding for the SNAP program, allowing the thousands of Kansans who rely on the benefit, and the state's appropriators, to breathe a sigh of relief.

Budget

The House passed its version of the budget, [HB2434](#), on Thursday by a vote of [68-53](#). Much of the work will be done in conference committee, so the comparison is not apples-to-apples, but this is a much weaker result than last year's 89-36 result. The budget saw opposition from both the most progressive and most conservative members. While the former pushed for more funding in education, the latter expressed concern over the large deficit in the State General Fund. While members expressed concern over the budget in one direction or another, no changes were made to the budget on the floor.

Prior to final passage, four amendments were offered, but none were adopted. The first proposal would have appropriated \$2.5 million to cover all copays for reduced price school lunches statewide. This amendment was rejected amid concerns about the misuse of the program and the quality of the food. Another issue some had with the House's budget package was the perceived underfunding of special education. One amendment brought by Rep. Jarrod Ousley (D-Merriam) attempted to add \$40.6 million in ARPA funds for special education. After that was rejected, he followed with a reduced proposal to add \$14.6 million, which was also rejected, albeit on a closer vote. Rep. Troy Waymaster (R-Bunker Hill), who chairs the House Committee on Appropriations and carried the bill on the floor, spoke against both amendments, arguing that most ARPA dollars are already allocated and that the one-time nature of the funding would cause challenges with the federal Maintenance of Effort requirements for special education. Other members pointed out that the state would already be meeting the statutory 92% cost reimbursement for special education if the federal government were meeting its obligations. The final amendment would have required legislators to notify the Public Disclosure Commission and the Kansas Press Association if they entered into a nondisclosure agreement related to STAR Bonds project, with a \$10 per day penalty for noncompliance. The bringer of the amendment, Rep. Steven Howe (R-Salina), said it was needed to restore trust in the decisions made by the legislature. After questioning, it became clear that the amendment applied not only to STAR Bond projects, but all NDAs. Multiple representatives spoke against it, detailing the NDAs they had to sign on a regular basis, arguing this would impede the day-to-day operations of the body, and the amendment was withdrawn. With the House successfully passing its budget, attention shifts to the Senate, which plans to bring its version to the floor this week. Once the Senate acts, conference committee negotiations between the two chambers will be close behind.

The House Committee of Appropriations did meet last week, holding a few informational hearings and working the annual "claims against the state" bill. Notably, the committee also passed out [HB2427](#), which would establish the position of "fiscal integrity auditor." It was amended to include two positions, one reporting to the Speaker of the House and the other reporting to the Senate President.

Tax

Though last week was short, it didn't feel that way for the tax committees. Beyond the major property tax reform bills, last week saw progress in both chambers: the Senate passed [SB402](#), which would combine Homestead 1 and Homestead 2 forms for the SAFESR tax credit. It was amended to change the name of the combined Homestead forms to the Kansas Golden Year form by an amendment brought by the bill carrier, Senator Caryn Tyson (R-Parker). The Senate passed [SB402](#) 39-1 the same day with emergency final action.

The House Taxation committee held 8 hearings and passed out 4 bills. A highlight includes [HB2757](#), a bill that would repeal or discontinue certain income tax credit incentives, with 1 proponent, 1 neutral, and 2 opponents testifying. Initially assigned to the House Commerce Committee, the proposal is a "proactive" measure taken in coordination with the Kansas Chamber of Commerce and other interested parties to clean up Kansas' income tax credits. The bill would extend the Angel investor tax credit and the Aviation tax credit, but as it is currently written, it would also eliminate 21 tax credits altogether, including the tax credit for the Friends of Cedar Crest Association, which is the non-profit organization that supports the Governor's residence.

Meanwhile, the Senate Assessment and Taxation committee held 6 hearings. They passed no bills out of committee, but heard an informational hearing from the city manager of Chanute regarding how they eliminated mill levies at the city level. One notable bill heard last week was [HB2464](#), which would extend the sunset for aerospace and aviation-related graduate tax credits. The hearing attracted two proponents, Jason Watkins on behalf of the Wichita Chamber and Andrew Wiens on behalf of Boeing, who stated that preserving the tax credits is essential for maintaining Kansas' role as a leader in the aviation industry, as other states and even nations pass incentives designed to lure aviation jobs away from the Sunflower State. The committee was ultimately receptive to their message.

Health & Safety

It was a slow week on the healthcare front last week, with the House Committee on Health and Human Services meeting only once, which was to tour the KDHE Lab. The House Committee on Insurance did not meet, and the Senate Committee on Financial Institutions and Insurance held an informational briefing on Medicare Advantage.

The Senate Committee on Public Health and Welfare was more productive, holding three hearings. The committee on Wednesday heard [HB2533](#) and [HB2534](#), which would enter the state into licensure compacts for occupational therapists and respiratory care therapists, respectively. Both hearings had limited testimony and fall in a pattern of licensure compacts being enacted by the state over the last few years, though some Senators expressed concern in handing over regulatory authority to a body outside of the legislature's control. On Thursday, the committee held a hearing on [HB2557](#), which would enact a revised version of an existing interstate compact that puts Kansas in the Interstate Commission for the Placement of Children. Kansas would become a non-member state if 35 other states approved the revised compact and Kansas did not. Chairwoman Beverly Gossage (R-Eudora) noted that they are waiting on the revisors for a technical amendment to the bill.

In non-legislative healthcare news, the Kansas Department of Health and Environment announced that it had received the federal funds for the Rural Health Transformation Fund and opened requests for applications for several grant programs, including the Regional Partnerships Grant Program and the Rural Emergency Hospital Conversion Assistance Program, KDHE will be hosting a webinar on Friday, March 6th, with letters of intent requested by March 9th.

Regarding public safety, the House Committee on Judiciary met Wednesday to hear [SB358](#), which would require certain felons to be held without bond until sentencing. The bill passed unanimously through the Senate. The bill was brought by Rep. Sydney Carlin (D-Manhattan), Riley County District Attorney, and 19 sexual abuse victims who raised the issue after a man was released on bond in Riley County after being convicted on 51 counts of felony sex crimes.

Economic Development

The House Committee on Commerce, Labor, and Economic Development met on Monday and held a hearing on [HB2768](#), a tenant-focused bill requiring landlords to accept multiple rent payments as long as rent is paid in full and on time, while also requiring landlords to consider all lawful sources of income when evaluating applicants. Proponents framed the bill as a flexibility and housing stability measure aligned with modern payment practices and aimed at reducing evictions, particularly for renters with irregular income or public benefits. Opponents, led by landlords, raised concerns about administrative burden, risk management, and potential abuse of payment structures. Committee discussion centered heavily on whether guardrails are needed around the number and timing of payments, with members signaling likely amendments. The committee also held a “Commerce Conversations” presentation on affordable housing, highlighting a growing supply gap and innovative housing approaches being developed in the state to lower construction costs.

The Senate Committee on Commerce met on Tuesday and held a hearing on [SB393](#), which would allow expanded alcohol sales hours during the 2026 FIFA World Cup. The bill permits licensed establishments to sell alcohol 24 hours a day during the event, while preserving local control for cities and counties to opt out. Proponents emphasized the economic opportunity tied to international tourism and the need to remain competitive with Missouri, which has already enacted similar policies. No opposition testimony was presented, and the bill was framed as a limited, event-specific policy that sunsets in July 2026.

House Commerce worked [HB2764](#) on Wednesday, a technical but significant unemployment insurance bill addressing how employment security provisions are modified through budget provisos and clarifying the use of employer-sponsored supplemental unemployment benefit plans. After adopting amendments, the committee inserted the contents of HB2764 into the shell of [SB229](#) and advanced the bill out of committee. Discussion focused on trust fund stability, benefit timing, and ensuring clearer statutory guidance for temporary layoffs and supplemental benefits. The committee also held Commerce Conversations presentations, including emerging construction technologies such as 3D-printed housing and workforce development efforts through the Build Up Kansas program, both aimed at addressing workforce shortages and housing supply challenges across the state.

Local Government

The House and Senate Local Government committees continued to be quiet this week, though there was local government related action in other committees last week. The House Committee on Commerce, Labor, and Economic Development held a hearing on [SB335](#), which requires local governments to enter into mutual waivers of consequential damages with contractors on construction projects. Construction companies and the Kansas Chamber of Commerce testified that this waiver was the industry standard to begin with, and only recently has it become a problem. Cities, they testified, have begun forcing one-sided waivers of consequential damages, opening up the contractors to more risk. Spencer Duncan, Mayor of Topeka and lobbyist for the League of Kansas Municipalities, opposed the bill, arguing that it was the state overstepping and dictating local contract terms, while barring the local government from pursuing all avenues to recover taxpayer dollars. The Department of Administration testified neutrally, expressing concerns that the language was overly broad while noting that contractors were already protected under other provisions.

The Senate Committee on Local Government held a hearing on [HB2433](#), which places authority for the transfer of water with the Chief Engineer. Water issues have become more of a priority for the legislature and the governor in recent years, as concern grows in Western Kansas over the long-term viability of the aquifers they rely on, and many localities have resorted to water use restrictions. The bill was brought by Rep. Barb Wasinger (R-Hays), who said the bill was prompted by an extended legal battle in which Hays and Russell were denied their water rights by the county government.

Utilities

House Utilities heard [SB348](#) on Tuesday. The bill would exempt any electric public utility that is a not-for-profit wholly owned subsidiary of an electric cooperative public utility from the jurisdiction of the state corporation commission. Led by Southern Pioneer Electric Company, proponents testified that the bill provides a no-cost pathway to self-regulation, as the costs and administrative burdens of regulation put pressure on rate increases. The KCC testified neutral, and the bill was passed and placed on the consent calendar the same day.

The committee also held hearings on two Senate bills on Thursday, focused on EV infrastructure and emergency response systems. [SB380](#) addresses electric vehicle charging by requiring retail electric suppliers to offer fair, reasonable, and non-discriminatory rates and services to all charging stations, excluding certain costs from the retail electric supplier's rate base, with certain exclusions, and requiring legislative review during the 2031 Legislative Session. Discussion centered on fairness in the market, cost recovery, and concerns about whether ratepayers could still indirectly subsidize infrastructure. The committee also heard [SB379](#), which would establish a statewide emergency medical dispatch and telecommunicator CPR program. Testimony strongly supported expanding access to life-saving instructions, particularly in rural areas with long EMS response times, though debate emerged over whether the program should be mandated statewide. That hearing will continue Tuesday.

[HB2435](#) was heard in Senate Utilities on Thursday. The bill amends the Gas System Reliability Surcharge (GSRS), the monthly fixed charge mechanism utilities use to recover certain infrastructure costs. The bill expands what qualifies as “eligible infrastructure investments” by removing the current restriction that GSRS cannot be used for new infrastructure to connect new customers, effectively allowing growth-related investments to be recovered through GSRS. The bill would increase the cap on the monthly GSRS charge from \$0.80 to \$1.35 per residential customer over the base rates in effect for the initial filing of a GSRS or the monthly charge established in the most recent filing of a GSRS for any subsequent filing of a GSRS, and shortens the KCC review window from 120 days to 90 days. Kansas Gas Service testified in support, arguing the bill modernizes a framework that has been in place roughly 20 years and is intended to reduce “regulatory lag,” particularly for growth investments tied to economic development and system reliability. KCC staff testified neutral, describing the substitute as a major improvement over the original bill they opposed.

The Citizens Utility Ratepayer Board testified in opposition, arguing the bill is designed to raise customer rates and will likely lead utilities to increase investments up to the higher cap. CURB stated there is no barrier to utilities making growth investments today and argued GSRS was created for safety and reliability investments, not speculative growth.

After closing HB2435, the committee reopened work for the second time on [SB439](#), dealing with utility crossings and paralleling of railroad rights-of-way. Two amendments were previously adopted: one clarifying that utilities remain subject to federal rail safety laws, and another extending timelines to 60 days for crossings and 120 days for paralleling, before utility work can commence. The committee adopted multiple amendments. Senator Marci Francisco's (D-Lawrence) amendment regarding flagging was adopted 5-4, allowing railroads to require flagging coordinated with radio communications for safe train movements, with opposition raising concerns about shortline or rarely used lines and whether this could force union flaggers in rural areas. Senator Bill Clifford (R-Garden City) offered an amendment that allows electric.

The Week Ahead

The following bills are scheduled to receive hearings this week.

Monday, March 3

9:00AM in House Local Government

Hearing on [HB2769](#) - Requiring members of governing bodies of subordinate service taxing areas to be residents of such taxing areas.

1:30PM in House Commerce, Labor, and Economic Development

Hearing on [SB334](#) - Facilitating nursing workforce development by providing education levels for instructors at nursing schools as a requirement for state approval.

Tuesday, March 4

8:30AM in Senate Public Health and Welfare

Hearing on [HB2250](#) - Substitute for HB 2250 - Defining emergency opioid antagonist as including an expired emergency opioid antagonist for a person rendering aid to another in reasonable need of medical assistance.

9:00AM in House Federal and State Affairs

Hearing on [SB372](#) - Enacting the app store accountability act to regulate app store and developer operations with respect to minors, create requirements for age verification and parental consent and provide for enforcement under the Kansas consumer protection act and through a private cause of action.

9:00AM in House Energy, Utilities and Telecommunications

Continuation Hearing [SB379](#) - Authorizing the state 911 board to establish a statewide program for emergency medical dispatch and telecommunicator cardiopulmonary resuscitation, medical direction and quality assurance services.

9:30AM in Senate Financial Institutions and Insurance

Hearing on [HB2703](#) - Enacting the Kansas health insurance affordability transparency act to require a report specifying the financial impact to covered individuals resulting from the passage of certain health insurance legislation.

1:30PM in Senate Commerce

Hearing on [HB2343](#) - Creating the no-impact home-based business fairness act, supporting the development and growth of such businesses by limiting the regulatory power of municipalities.

Wednesday, March 3

8:30AM in Senate Public Health and Welfare

Hearing on [HB2478](#) - Requiring that advanced practice registered nurses and registered nurse anesthetists submit to a criminal history check upon application for a nursing license.

9:00AM in House Federal and State Affairs

Continuation Hearing on [SB372](#) - Enacting the app store accountability act to regulate app store and developer operations with respect to minors, create requirements for age verification and parental consent and provide for enforcement under the Kansas consumer protection act and through a private cause of action.

9:00AM in House Financial Institutions and Pensions

Hearing on [SB375](#) - Enacting the proxy advisor transparency act, requiring proxy advisors to make certain disclosures when recommending an action against company management, authorizing the attorney general to investigate and take enforcement actions against violators and establishing a private right of action for a declaratory judgment or injunctive relief.

9:30AM in Senate Financial Institutions and Insurance

Hearing on [HB2564](#) - Providing for the election of alternative payment methods by a dental provider and allowing such payment method to remain in force for the duration of a contract with a dental benefit plan.

10:30AM in Senate Judiciary

Hearing on [HB2762](#) - Modifying the crime of unlawful sexual relations to describe who is a person in a position of authority for a school.

1:30PM in House Health and Human Services

Hearing on [SB431](#) - Establishing the remote practice of pharmacy, requiring certain conditions for such practice and limiting activities performed under such practice.

1:30PM in House Commerce, Labor, and Economic Development

Hearing on [SB418](#) - Enacting the by-right housing development act to provide a streamlined permit approval process for by-right housing developments, allowing third-party review of new residential construction development documents and inspection of improvements, requiring political subdivisions to allow certain building provisions for single-family residences of a certain size, excluding owner initiated rezoning to a single-family residential district from protest petition provisions and providing for all land within the corporate limits of a city to be considered zoned for single-family residential use.

1:30PM in Senate Commerce

Hearing on [HB2343](#) - Creating the no-impact home-based business fairness act, supporting the development and growth of such businesses by limiting the regulatory power of municipalities.

1:30PM in Senate Commerce

Hearing on [HB2739](#) - Providing that fire sprinkler systems shall not be required in this state for multi-family dwellings of four attached units or fewer, prohibiting municipal fire sprinkler requirements for multi-family dwellings of four or fewer attached living units and defining apartment buildings for purposes of the fire code.

3:30PM in House Judiciary

Hearing on [SB462](#) - Prohibiting certain public nuisance claims, requiring the attorney general to bring nuisance actions that are not wholly contained in one political subdivision, requiring special injury for certain public nuisance actions and providing an accrual period for the statute of limitations in public nuisance actions.

Hearing on [SB481](#) - Permitting a municipal judge to initiate a psychiatric or psychological examination to determine competence and setting forth relevant procedures.

Thursday, March 5

1:30PM in Senate Commerce

Hearing on [HB2602](#) - Establishing requirements for a portable benefit plan for independent contractors, determining types of contributions to such plans and providing a subtraction modification for Kansas income tax purposes.

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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