

# THE ADVOCATE

A WEEKLY UPDATE  
FROM THE KANSAS  
LEGISLATURE

ADVOCACY THAT WORKS

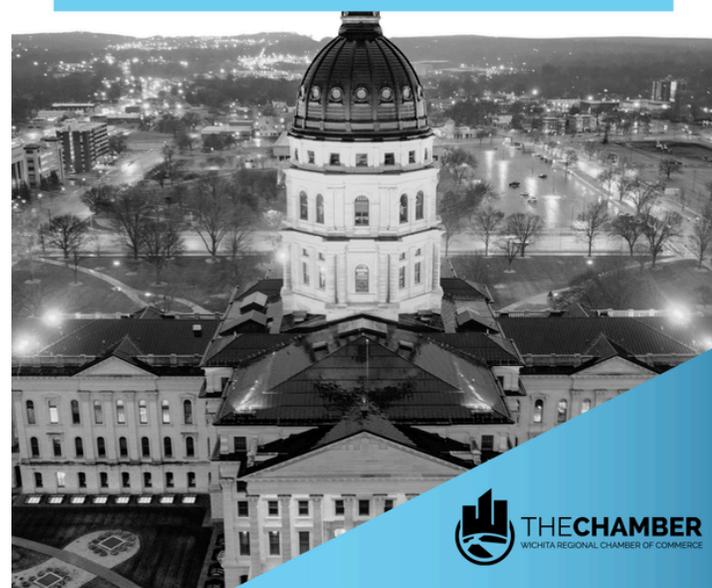


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WICHITA REGIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

## 2026 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA



## Intro

Last week had a very somber beginning as word spread of the sudden passing of Republican Representative John Resman of Olathe on Monday. Speaker Dan Hawkins (R-Wichita) released a statement saying, "Representative John Resman served with integrity, dedication, and a genuine care for the people of his district." Resman had been in the House since 2017 and served in the Army and with the Johnson County Sheriff's Office. Our thoughts and prayers go out to his friends and family.

Both chambers continued working through legislation last week, though the significance of the measures moving forward varies widely. Senate committees are now working on the influx of bills from the House, while many House committees have shifted to informational hearings and presentations due to the limited number of bills arriving from the Senate. Much of the Senate's attention in recent weeks has been consumed by budget work, as its smaller number of committees were tasked with advancing the chamber's spending plan.

Legislators are once again feeling the pressure of the condensed calendar as they work to advance priorities ahead of approaching deadlines. Today marks the 57th day of the session, and next Tuesday, the 17th, is the final day for non-exempt committees to meet and consider bills before the Legislature transitions to full days of floor debate for the remainder of the week.

## **Stadium Sports Authority Bill Introduced in the House**

[HB2793](#) was introduced on Friday and would create a new Kansas sports authority to oversee the construction and operations of the proposed \$3 billion domed Kansas City Chiefs stadium and a \$300 million practice facility in Olathe. The legislation establishes a nine-member board, primarily appointed by the governor and legislative leaders, along with one representative from the Chiefs. Lawmakers plan to hold a joint House and Senate Commerce Committee hearing tomorrow as the Legislature enters the final weeks of the session.

The authority would manage development and operations of the stadium, which is planned near I-435 and I-70 in Wyandotte County and expected to open in 2031. The bill exempts the authority from several state procurement and administrative requirements, including competitive bidding and architectural selection rules, allowing project leaders to select specialized stadium designers and contractors directly.

The authority would also be exempt from property taxes and certain state and federal taxes related to the stadium and practice facility, ultimately saving about \$1 billion by exempting the stadium bonds from federal income taxes. Under the proposal, the Chiefs would be responsible for covering any construction cost overruns and for demolition costs if the team leaves.

If approved, board appointments must be made by August 31, and local officials from Kansas City, and Olathe could serve as non-voting members if their cities participate in the STAR bond financing package, which is expected to cover up to 70% of project costs over an allowed 30-year repayment period, although it is anticipated that the bonds will pay off much more quickly.

## **Cellphone Ban Passes Senate**

The Senate voted 32-4 to approve legislation banning student cellphone use during the school day in public schools and accredited private schools, sending [HB2299](#) back to the House for concurrence with Senate amendments. Governor Kelly (D) has already indicated she would sign the measure, which has the backing of Senate Majority Leader Chase Blasi (R-Andale) and Senate Minority Leader Dinah Sykes (D-Lenexa). The bill requires schools to adopt policies prohibiting cellphone use from the start of the school day until dismissal, including during lunch, recess, and passing periods, with devices required to be turned off and stored away. Exceptions are allowed for medical needs or individualized education programs.

The legislation also requires schools to prohibit employees from communicating with students through social media platforms and bars teachers from requiring social media use for assignments or activities. Lawmakers said the bill is intended to address classroom distractions and student mental health concerns. In a compromise, the Senate amended the bill so that, in addition to public schools, the ban applies only to private schools accredited by the Kansas State Department of Education, while homeschools and virtual schools are exempt.

# Candy and Soda Excluded from Food-Assistance

Governor Laura Kelly (D) announced last Wednesday that the U.S. Department of Agriculture approved Kansas' request to exclude candy and soda from purchases made with federal food assistance benefits. The waiver, required by language in last year's state budget, was submitted in May and took about ten months to receive federal approval. Kansas joins 21 other states with similar restrictions, including Missouri, Nebraska, Iowa, and Oklahoma. State officials said implementation is complex because Kansas' law defines candy and soft drinks based on ingredients rather than simple product categories, requiring the state and retailers to identify which items qualify. The Department for Children and Families is developing guidance for retailers and recipients and expects the new restrictions to begin February 15, 2027, with a contractor to assist with implementation later this year.

## Budget

The House Committee on Appropriations met last week to receive informational briefings from the University of Kansas on bonding authority to make renovations to the School of Architecture's historic Marvin Hall and Wichita State University regarding the MRO program, which has been renamed to the Military Sustainment Program. The committee then worked [HB2788](#), which establishes a business enterprise program oversight task force to review the state's administration of priority placement for blind vendors on state property, and passed the bill out after an amendment by Representative Will Carpenter (R-El Dorado) to change the selection process for the board to a secret ballot. The Senate Committee on Ways and Means also held hearings on [HB2237](#), authorizing recruitment and retention initiatives within state agencies, and [HB2393](#), which allows the Kansas Supreme Court to impose a charge to fund non-judicial personnel through June 30, 2030. Additionally, the committee worked and passed out [HB2555](#) related to the RHTP initiative and the legislature having oversight over it after hearing testimony from one proponent.

The main action on the budget, however, came on the Senate floor. A bevy of amendments to the state budget were adopted, including directing an interim study on Kansas Highway Patrol capital improvement projects, adding transparency requirements for APEX tax incentive reporting, redirecting \$1 million from a mental health pilot program to special education, establishing a property tax relief fund intended to buy down the 20-mill levy, and removing the \$10 regular license plate fee while retaining the \$11 personalized plate fee. Other adopted amendments eliminated the IndiGov contract to save approximately \$1 million, redirected \$3 million with 75% designated for Meals on Wheels, created a \$1 million weekend transportation pilot program for Kansans with intellectual and physical disabilities, and made several smaller funding adjustments. There was an additional slate of amendments that were offered but not adopted, including proposals to increase special education funding by \$24 million, provide employee pay adjustments, strike the MRO proviso related to Yingling, redirect MRO funding to a 2.5% employee pay increase, fund the Dunbar Theatre project, eliminate reduced-price school lunch copays, expand the community support waiver, and extend the current school finance formula.

The most controversial amendment that was adopted was brought by Senator Michael Murphy (R-Sylvia). The amendment was a response to an incident where several students were beaten in a counter-protest during a school walkout, and it would fine school districts for allowing walkouts without parental permission. The amendment passed by a tight 21-18 vote. The finalized budget itself ended up passing the Senate on an even narrower 21-19 vote. Both chambers will now head to conference and sort out the differences in the two budgets, which is anticipated to start early next week.

## Tax

Taxation committees continued to work long hours last week, but are making steady progress through the major property tax relief bills of the session. The cooperation between the two committees continues, for now: the House committee heard the Senate's proposed constitutional amendment last week, [SCR1616](#), which would cap property tax assessed value increases of real property at 3% a year, and the Senate committee heard the House's property tax relief plan, [HB2745](#), which would require a protest petition of the electors to approve increases in property tax revenues for the next year, establishing a property tax limit in lieu of the revenue neutral rate. Both committee chairs, Representative Adam Smith (R-Weskan) and Senator Caryn Tyson (R-Parker), have made their preferences for their own proposals clear, but if leadership has its way, both plans will reach the floors of the opposite chambers.

Of course, this is not as straightforward a process as it might seem. [SCR1616](#) was passed out of House Taxation on Thursday, but not before a failed substitute motion by Representative Sawyer-Clayton (D-Overland Park) to gut the proposal and replace it with [HCR5025](#) to lower the assessed valuation of residential homes from 11.5% to 9%. The proposal was successfully amended, however, to move the election from August to November. As for [HB2745](#), although it is likely it will be passed out of the Senate Assessment and Taxation Committee, it may not bear much resemblance to the House bill. As it stands, the bill was amended by Senator Virgil Peck (R-Havana), with the support of Chairwoman Senator Caryn Tyson (R-Parker), to add the revenue-neutral rate back into the bill and then to expand it to include the protest petition as the last step in the revenue-neutral process. This was then further amended by Senator Jeff Klemp (R-Leavenworth) to add the Consumer Price Index average for the last three years to the revenue-neutral rate, in an attempt to give taxpayers more control.

Work on these two proposals has taken up a lot of time in both committees, especially in the Senate Committee last week, which heard [HB2745](#) over two days, worked the bill on Thursday, and will plan to continue the process of working the bill today. Senator Tyson has also announced her intention to make the bill a substitute bill after all amendments have been made. As for the House, the Taxation Committee heard [SCR1616](#) last Wednesday, which in combination with another hearing and final action on two additional bills, stretched the committee meeting to a grueling 3 hours. Hearings for both proposals mirrored their earlier hearings this session, with proponents describing the proposals as tangible property tax relief and opponents describing them as ineffective "tax shifts" at best and unworkable for local governments at worst.

One representative, Carolyn Caiharr (R-Edwardsville), supported [SCR1616](#) because, as she put it last Thursday in reference to the House hearing, “we heard from a lot of people” but “every person who stood before us yesterday was paid to be here. The constituents whom I’m standing for and I’m voting for were at work.” In contrast to this, Ranking Minority Member Representative Tom Sawyer (D-Wichita) said “this destroys your tax system.” The question remains, both to members of the committee and to the public, not whether to have property tax relief, but how to do it.

In addition to the ongoing conversation on property tax relief, House Taxation heard several other bills this week, such as [HB2645](#), which would extend tax credits for capital improvements for community and technical colleges, and [HB2773](#), which would allow single factor apportionment of business income by manufacturers of alcoholic liquor depending on whether the taxpayer is a qualifying Kansas investor or a general manufacturer. Both bills had no neutral or opposition testimony, and [HB2645](#) was passed successfully out of committee on Thursday. Notably, the committee also failed to pass out [HB2541](#), the Kansas Rural Business Growth Program Act, in part due to criticism by Representative Francis Awerkamp (R-St. Marys) that it is “a bad bill,” pushed by big businesses and lobbyists for a \$30 million carve-out without interest.

## Health & Safety

The health committees, especially the House Committee on Health and Human Services under the direction of Chairman Will Carpenter (R-El Dorado), have focused on expanding access to care and allowing medical professionals to practice to the fullest extent of their education and training. This has been a focus of the legislature in the healthcare space over the last few years, and last week was no different. On Wednesday, the House Committee on Health and Human Services held a hearing on [SB430](#), which would allow physical therapists to perform certain blood tests. The bill had some opposition from the Board of Healing Arts, which felt it needed authority to write rules and regulations to govern appropriate usage of the tests and avoid liability, which was echoed by Vice Chairman Ron Bryce (R-Coffeyville), himself a physician.

He brought an amendment when the bill was worked on Thursday, to address the concerns brought by the Board of Healing Arts. Other committee members thought it was unnecessary and counterproductive, given the bill's purpose of making it easier to administer simple blood tests, and the amendment failed. The bill was then passed out favorably. Also on Thursday, the House committee passed out [SB328](#), which allowed for more types of epinephrine to be used by schools, and [SB448](#), which allowed for expedited treatment of the partners of those diagnosed with STDs. These smaller measures were considered common sense by the committee and drew no opposition testimony or much discussion from the committee members.

The House Committee on Health and Human Services both heard and worked [SB271](#) on the same day, last Tuesday. The move likely came due to the time crunch many committees have found themselves under this year, as well as the relatively non-controversial nature of the bill, which passed 40-0 through the Senate. The bill is an annual update on the eligibility requirements for the CHIP program, which is tied to the 2008 federal poverty level. Chairman Carpenter offered one amendment, to require proof of pregnancy to receive the expanded pregnancy benefits, which was accepted, and then the bill was passed out favorably.

The Senate Committee on Public Health and Welfare continued the House's trend on licensure, holding hearings on interstate compacts for esthetician and athletic trainer licensure. The Senate committee also had an interesting hearing on Thursday on [HB2132](#). The bill, championed by Rep. Cyndi Howerton (R-Wichita), the Chairwoman of the House Committee on Child Welfare and Foster Care, changes the Child in Need of Care statute to say that law enforcement officers "may" take a child into custody if the officer considers them at risk, rather than "shall." A bill like this usually would be placed in the always-busy Senate Committee on Judiciary, but was heard in Public Health and Welfare, likely due to the aforementioned time constraints. It had a long journey to reach this point, being introduced and worked last year, then passed out as a substitute before being withdrawn from the calendar, worked again this year, and passed the House as a substitute for a substitute. After all of the changes, the bill saw no opposition in the House, passing unanimously. In the Senate hearing, there was opposition from a former district attorney, who argued the "may" language forced law enforcement to make tough decisions at the scene that may expose them to risk, though Ed Klumpp, representing multiple law enforcement organizations, said that law enforcement supported the bill after the House added clarifying amendments and that officers said they needed to have discretion at the scene.

In other health news, the House Committee on Insurance held an informational hearing on the differences between the federal Pharmacy Benefit Manager reform legislation and the bill passed by the Kansas Senate, [SB360](#). Many of the key provisions in SB360 were limited only to Medicare or other federally regulated plans in the federal legislation, not covering most commercial plans in Kansas. The federal regulation also would not take full effect until 2029.

## **Economic Development**

The House Commerce, Labor and Economic Development Committee met Wednesday to hold a hearing on [SB418](#), legislation creating the By-Right Housing Development Act. The bill aims to streamline the permitting process for residential construction by 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. Supporters argued the measure would reduce regulatory delays and lower the cost of building entry-level homes, helping address Kansas' housing supply shortage.

Proponents, including Senator TJ Rose (R-Olathe) and Representative Nick Hoheisel (R-Wichita), emphasized that the average age of a first-time homebuyer has risen significantly and argued that regulatory red tape is contributing to housing affordability challenges across the state. They testified that the legislation would allow single-family homes to be built more easily while maintaining existing health and safety inspections. Several housing advocates and free-market groups supported the bill, stating that reducing permitting delays could help increase housing supply and improve affordability. Opponents, including the City of Topeka and the League of Kansas Municipalities, raised concerns that the bill could limit local governments' ability to adopt building codes or manage development in a manner consistent with local priorities. Most other cities moved to a neutral position on the bill after Senate amendments, with some even becoming proponents of the legislation.

Earlier in the week, the Senate Commerce Committee held hearings Tuesday on [HB2719](#) and [HB2343](#). HB2719 proposes several technical changes to the state rules and regulations process, including allowing agencies to adopt non-substantive “technical amendments” to regulations without initiating a full rulemaking process and establishing a priority track for regulations required by new legislation. The bill also adds that the Department of the Budget is not required to approve proposed rules and regulations mandated by the federal government. The measure previously passed the House unanimously.

The committee also heard HB2343, the No-Impact Home-Based Business Fairness Act. The bill would limit municipalities’ ability to regulate certain home-based businesses that operate entirely within a residence and do not create additional parking, employees, or visible commercial activity. Proponents argued that the measure would reduce regulatory barriers for entrepreneurs and encourage small-business formation, noting that many companies begin as home-based operations. Opponents, including local government representatives and homeowner association advocates, raised concerns that the bill would override local zoning rules and create ambiguity regarding property covenants and neighborhood protections. The committee closed the hearing and is expected to continue discussions on potential amendments.

## **Local Government**

The House Committee on Local Government began last week with a hearing on [HB2769](#). The bill would require any member of a taxing authority to live within the taxing district. The hearing was non-controversial, though Sedgwick County’s Board of County Commissioners submitted neutral testimony requesting clarification that the bill would not be interpreted to conflict with existing statute regarding fire districts. The House committee also held presentations from the League of Kansas Municipalities and the Kansas Association of Counties, designed to better inform the committee on the local budgeting process.

In the Senate Committee on Local Government, there were a couple of odd hearings on Tuesday and Wednesday. The committee heard [HB2624](#), which allows counties to dissolve a fire district if it has no territory, and then [HB2603](#), which bans municipalities from making an ordinance regarding battery-charged security fences. The committee also heard [HB2737](#), which creates an optional repayment structure for Tax Increment Financing agreements. While the bill did not have any opposition, the League of Kansas Municipalities offered neutral testimony that warned the bill may not be as unimpactful or optional as it initially seems, due to political pressure and new legal obligations.

The Senate Committee on Commerce held two days of hearings on [HB2739](#), which would clarify that sprinkler systems are not required in triplex and quadplex housing units. While initially opposed by firefighters, they moved to neutral after changes were made. Sean Miller, on behalf of the Kansas Building Industry Association, testified that he would be comfortable with an amendment to the bill that would give municipalities local control over whether to mandate sprinklers in such units.

# Utilities

The utility committees had a very quiet week; both received updates from the Kansas Independent Oil and Gas Association and the Bill Gates-founded nuclear energy and radiopharmaceuticals company Terra Power. KIOGA highlighted that Kansas produces roughly 75,000 barrels of oil per day and ranks 14th nationally in production, with activity occurring in 93 of the state's 105 counties. TerraPower discussed their Sodium reactor technology, which would use liquid sodium instead of water for cooling.

The House Energy, Utilities and Telecommunications Committee met Tuesday to continue the week's single bill hearing on [SB379](#), legislation authorizing the State 911 Board to establish a statewide program for emergency medical dispatch and telecommunicator CPR. Supporters, including the American Heart Association, argued the bill would create minimum emergency response standards across the state and help dispatchers guide callers through lifesaving CPR before first responders arrive. They noted that many dispatch centers already provide these services and that broader implementation could improve survival outcomes during cardiac emergencies. Opponents, including the Kansas Sheriffs' Association and rural law enforcement, raised concerns about the bill's mandate requiring dispatchers to complete telecommunicator CPR training. They argued that smaller public safety answering points, particularly those with only one dispatcher on duty, could face operational challenges in implementing the requirement, and warned that the proposal could create an unfunded mandate for rural counties.

[SB439](#), the Utility Railroad Crossing Act, was brought to the Senate floor on Wednesday. Senator Marci Francisco (D-Lawrence) successfully brought an amendment to change the implementation timeline to the utilities' suggested timeline for each issue. Senator Mike Fagg (R-El Dorado), the carrier of the bill, brought a technical amendment. The bill saw no opposition remarks in the chamber and passed 33-5; however, it will likely face more pushback in the House.

## The Week Ahead

The following bills are scheduled to receive hearings this week.

### Monday, March 9

9:30AM in Senate Assessment and Taxation

Hearing on [SB521](#) - Providing for credits for payment of employee's child care and contributions to a third party for increased child care options.

9:30AM in Senate Financial Institutions and Insurance

Hearing on [SB524](#) - Requiring banks to enter into a written agreement with the state treasurer to be a depository of public moneys, increasing the market value of securities necessary to secure the deposit of public moneys, providing procedures for when a depository fails to follow the requirements of the state treasurer, modifying certain definitions, authorizing the state treasurer to assess a fee to operate the public moneys pooled method, creating the public moneys fee fund and providing exceptions to the public moneys pooled method if accounts are subject to conflicting federal law.

10:30AM in Senate Judiciary

Hearing on [HB2614](#) - Allowing certain exceptions to the confidentiality of records and information given to the crime victims compensation board.

1:30PM in House Corrections and Juvenile Justice

Hearing on [SB487](#) - Requiring the Kansas bureau of investigation to implement a statewide offender registration system for agencies who register offenders under the offender registration act.

1:30PM in Senate Commerce

Hearing on [HB2346](#) - Substitute for HB 2346 by Committee on Commerce, Labor and Economic Development - Establishing the Kansas sports tourism grant program administered by the secretary of commerce to provide matching grants to communities for developing and continuing sporting events, providing for funding of such grants from the state economic development initiatives fund or from the state general fund if funds are not available therefrom.

## **Tuesday, March 10**

8:30AM in Senate Transportation

Hearing on [HB2647](#) - Authorizing the Kansas department of transportation to establish a statewide conduit system for fiber optic transmissions of broadband connections.

9:30AM in Senate Local Government

Hearing on [HB2571](#) - Requiring cost-sharing agreements between municipalities for the maintenance of shared roads.

10:30AM in Senate Judiciary

Hearing on [HB2639](#) - Changing the name of juvenile crisis intervention centers to juvenile stabilization centers, modifying the intake criteria and treatment provided at such centers and transferring moneys from the evidence-based programs account of the state general fund for use at such centers.

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 [HB2793](#) - Enacting the Kansas sports authority act to establish a sports authority to provide for the construction, financing and management of certain sports facilities and sports facility infrastructure and create venues for professional sports and other events.

## **Wednesday, March 11**

8:30AM in Senate Public Health and Welfare

Hearing on [HB2676](#) - Permitting a pharmacist to initiate therapy for certain conditions consistent with the pharmacist's education, training and experience.

Hearing on [HB2524](#) - Permitting the secretary for children and families to license family foster homes when certain persons reside in such home and creating an appeal process for family foster homes when licenses are not granted.

8:30AM in Senate Transportation

Hearing on [HB2467](#) - Prohibiting past convictions or sanctions for failure to comply with a traffic citation that are more than five years old from being considered by courts and the division of vehicles in determining suspended or restricted driving privileges and eliminating certain notice requirements for the division of vehicles.

10:30AM in Senate Judiciary

Hearing on [HB2594](#) - Modifying the elements of the crime of blackmail related to threatened dissemination of any image, video or other recording of another identifiable person who is nude or engaged in sexual activity by changing the connection to breach of privacy and describing the content of the image, video or other recording.

Hearing on [HB2521](#) - Expanding the Kansas tort claims act to include child placement agencies that contract with the secretary for children and families.

1:30PM in House Health and Human Services

Hearing on [SB497](#) - Adding kratom to schedule I of the uniform controlled substances act and making conforming amendments to the definition of fentanyl-related controlled substance in the criminal code.

1:30PM in Senate Education

Hearing on [HB2320](#) - Authorizing children in the custody of the secretary of the department for children and families to attend school in any school district, requiring records for such students to be timely transferred between school districts and requiring a transportation plan if the child remains in the school of origin.

3:30PM in House Insurance

Hearing on [SB360](#) - Enacting the Kansas consumer prescription protection and accountability act and providing for regulation and registration of pharmacy benefits managers.

3:30PM in House Agriculture and Natural Resources

Hearing on [SB390](#) - Prohibiting certain additives in food provided by schools as part of certain food service programs and requiring schools to certify that school facilities do not serve food that contains such food additives.

## **Thursday, March 12**

1:30PM in Senate Commerce

Hearing on [HB2588](#) - Providing for statewide electrician licensing by the board of technical professions.

## **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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