



HOUSING HIGHLIGHTS



2026 Legislature Week Nine

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Path To Employment Opportunities

Kansas was selected by the United States Department of Labor as one of only seven core states to join the National Expansion of Employment Opportunities Network initiative. The Kansas Department for Aging and Disability Services announced that NEON focuses on expanding job opportunities and improving financial stability for people who have mental health conditions. Kansas will receive 550 hours of technical service and ongoing mentoring from relevant subject-matter experts with this designation. The program will give people the confidence to succeed by breaking down structural barriers to employment. This partnership seeks to advance evidence-based practices that have a fundamental impact in improving employment outcomes for Kansans living with mental health conditions and co-occurring disabilities.

Funds Cut for Kansas River Clean-up

Legislators have cut \$100,000 in funding specifically set aside to get decades' worth of industrial waste removed from the Kansas River. The money was intended to be used on behalf of the nonprofit Friends of the Kaw, which was expected to be responsible for removing "solid waste," such as old bridge steel and construction materials in the riverbed in Topeka, Wamego, Manhattan, and Junction City. An 18-18 tie in the Senate where Senator Francisco proposed an amendment to restore the funding failed. The Kansas River serves as a principal source of drinking water for more than 950,000 Kansans. The huge debris remains a significant endangerment to boaters, kayakers, and emergency responders.

Proposed 3% Cap on Home Value Stalls in House

The Kansas House considered, but ultimately did not advance, a proposed constitutional amendment that would have limited annual increases in the assessed value of real property to 3%. The intent of the resolution is to prevent sudden spikes in home values from translating into sharp increases in property tax bills. The idea initially gained traction in the Kansas Senate, which passed its version of the amendment by a 30–10 vote in late February before sending it to the House. Supporters argued that rapidly rising home values in recent years have placed an unfair burden on homeowners, leading to significant increases in property tax bills simply because the housing market is strong. Critics, however, contended that the proposal would not address the root cause of property tax increases. They noted that limiting assessed value growth does not guarantee lower tax bills or reduce the overall tax burden. Critics also warned that caps on assessed value increases can shift a greater share of the tax responsibility onto other property owners, such as new homeowners, businesses, or properties not subject to the same limits.

School Phone Ban Policy Sent To Governor

Kansas lawmakers officially passed a law limiting student use of cell phones throughout the school day. The bill passed the Senate last week and cleared the House on Tuesday. Now, it's sitting on Governor Kelly's desk. If she signs it - or allows it to go through without her signature - all Kansas school districts and accredited private schools will be mandated to employ stringent "bell to bell, no cell" policies. Advocates, including House Speaker Dan Hawkins and Majority Leader Chris Croft, say smartphones are a huge distraction doing direct damage to kids' mental health. They think taking phones out of classrooms will compel students to interact more deeply with their teachers and classmates, alleviate social media anxiety, and focus attention on learning again. And while opponents of the statewide mandate are not necessarily pro-cell phone, they are local control advocates. Lawmakers such as Representative Stogsdill contend that about 200 school districts in Kansas are already addressing the issue themselves. They think they should trust local school boards to decide how things will be governed for their communities, rather than having a blanket mandate from the state.

Higher Education Governance Reorganization

The House Higher Education Budget Committee held a hearing on HB 2798 Thursday afternoon. Testimony included formal opposition from the Kansas Board of Regents (KBOR), whose members had met the previous day and unanimously voted to oppose the current version of the bill, citing concerns that it erodes the nine-member board's authority over the state's three largest universities. However, in remarks to the committee the following day, the KBOR chair indicated the Board would be supportive of HB 2798 if Fort Hays State University, Pittsburg State University, and Emporia State University were also included in the bill's provisions. Committee discussion focused on the bill's implications for university autonomy and oversight. Under the proposal, the Board of Regents would have no input on certain expenditures by the state's three largest universities unless the spending involved state tax dollars. The committee is expected to meet again Monday to "work" the bill and could advance it to the full House. If approved by the committee, HB 2798 could be scheduled for floor debate as early as next week.

Managing Penny Phase Out

After President Trump ruled in early 2026 that pennies would no longer be produced because production costs were just beyond their means to cover, lawmakers in Kansas are currently setting statewide rounding rules for cash transactions. Though the U.S. Treasury confirms that existing pennies remain legal tender, the halt has resulted in an immediate legislative response. State proposals require symmetrical rounding to the nearest nickel in cash transactions, to be applied only after all taxes and reductions have been computed in order to collect accurate state revenues. Transactions made by digital or card channels are exempt and will proceed exactly to the cent mark. There are also immediate measures by local governments. The city of Liberal will no longer accept pennies for municipal cash transactions from March 16. City officials determined that for services, such as utilities, cash payments will round up to the next nickel, and an overpayment will be automatically noted onto the resident account. Residents have been advised to use other payment methods as the state adjusts to this kind of new financial landscape.

Property Tax Legislation Briefs

Legislators are considering several proposals aimed at addressing years of rising property taxes, though many raise concerns about potential revenue losses. SB 488 would phase out property taxes by 2028 and replace the revenue with a surcharge on retail sales, excluding purchases of food, fuel, utilities, and medicine. The Kansas Department of Revenue estimates the bill, as drafted, would create a significant revenue shortfall over three years. Lawmakers acknowledge the proposal would require substantial revisions before it could be implemented. Another proposal, SCR 1625, would exempt homeowners over age 60 from the portion of property taxes that fund school districts. Supporters argue older residents should not pay for services they no longer use, while opponents maintain that funding public education is a shared community responsibility. These proposals are among several ideas under discussion to address property taxes, including identifying alternative funding sources for public schools.

State Agencies Warn Public Of Text Scams

The Kansas Department of Transportation and the Kansas Department of Revenue are warning residents about a new texting scam circulating across the state. Scammers are sending urgent messages posing as state agencies or toll authorities, claiming recipients owe unpaid tickets or tolls and threatening driver's license suspension unless immediate payment is made.

State officials emphasize that Kansas agencies **will never request payment for fines or tolls through a text message**. Official notices are sent through the mail.

Residents who receive one of these messages should take the following steps:

- **Do not click the link.** These links are designed to steal personal or financial information.
- **Report and delete the message.** Use your phone's built-in "report spam" function before deleting the text.
- **Verify independently.** If concerned about your status, check through the official Kansas driver's license or state agency website rather than using the link in the message.
- **Act quickly if information was shared.** Contact your bank immediately to secure your accounts and report the incident to the Federal Trade Commission or the FBI's Internet Crime Complaint Center (IC3).

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