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News from the Capitol



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2020 Legislative Update - Week #3

January 27 - January 31, 2020

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If you, or someone you know are interested in serving as a page for the 2020 Legislative Session, please contact [me](#). I always enjoy helping kids learn more about our government and its processes. Current dates available are: February 12th, March 17th, March 25th, and April 1st. If these dates do not work with school calendars and you are interested we can attempt to book for alternative dates.

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[GOOO CHIEFS!!!](#)

Not everything is always serious at the Capitol. This week Chief's fever has definitely taken hold, as they play for their first Super Bowl Championship in 51 years.

However, both teams have intense connections to the state of Kansas. The 49ers have two coaches from the area. Shane Day, a graduate of Manhattan High School will be on the sidelines for Sunday's game. Additionally, Hesston, KS native, Katie Sowers will be making NFL history being the first female and first openly LGBT coach in a Super Bowl match up. Kansas State will also be represented with three former players in Sunday's game. The team from San Francisco also has two alumni on its roster, Elijah Lee and D.J. Reed, Jr. While Byron Pringle has found a home down I-70 in Kansas City.

Here's hoping for a safe and exciting game, and needless to say I'll be trading in my normal purple jersey for one of red, gold, and white on Sunday!

[Medicaid/KanCare Update](#)

The [Senate Public Health and Welfare Committee](#) has completed its hearing process on [SB 252](#) to expand Medicaid coverage to over 100,000 Kansans in financial hardship. They will complete the discussion and action phase of the bill on February 5th and 6th.

[Childcare Deserts](#)

Last week, I touched briefly on the issue of childcare deserts. This state lacks access to close and affordable daycare services across the state. This was a problem in the mid-1990s when I was on the Manhattan City Commission and remains a problem today. It impacts everything from family incomes, the ability for women to succeed outside the home, and the safety of our children. There are 196,000 children across the state under the age of 5, and nearly 1/5th of them live in poverty. Many more grow up in families who are struggling to meet their basic needs. This April the Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund will be releasing their strategic plan in April of 2020. I look forward to working with the body and see how we can improve this issue affecting so many Kansas families. To get more information:

- Webinars and Email Sign-Ups: kschildrenscabinet.org/early-childhood
- Share your ideas: kschildrenscabinet.org/share

[Bills of Interest](#)

I have received numerous emails regarding [HCR 5019](#) and [SCR 1613](#), both seeking to put forward a Constitutional Amendment to voters in August, which would allow legislative restrictions on abortion. Late on Wednesday, January 29th, the Senate held an emergency, final action vote and passed the proposal by 28-12. During the four-hour session, the Senate voted against protecting the life of the mother ([Hensley Amendment](#)) by the same margin. An amendment passed to make the August primary an official state special election, adding additional costs to the state.

This bill could be heard and debated on the [House floor](#) as early as Tuesday, February 4th.

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This week, the Appropriations Committee has some extremely interesting briefings from various interest groups and agencies I thought I would share with you.

Oil and Natural Gas Industry

The first was from multiple groups associated with the oil and natural gas producers across the state who shared some interesting facts:

- Oil and natural gas are produced in 90 of Kansas' 105 counties.
- Small independent producers are responsible for 92% of oil and 63% of natural gas production in our state.
- The Fraser Institute ranked Kansas 3rd in the nation for attractive oil and gas investment states.

However, the Trump trade war with China (which hit US oil exports with a 25% tariff), changes in energy production, and geopolitical uncertainty have left many in limbo:

- In 2014, \$1.3 billion was invested in this industry statewide, in 2019 that was down to \$300 million.
- Royalty payments dropped by \$400 million, resulting in \$341 million lost to family incomes.
- Oil and gas tax collections are down 50%.
- The state has suffered 3,100 direct industry layoffs.

I was a bit shocked to hear that the industry opposes a cap and trade carbon tax, but would support carbon capture tax credits, which left me with more questions than answers. I would also like to see the Wind Energy groups provide their numbers, to see if Kansas is maintaining its overall energy production, and how potentially job training programs could encourage those losing their jobs to transition into new energy production areas.

KPERS

The second was from the Kansas Public Employee Retirement System. KPERS is overseen by a 9-member trustee board: 4 appointed by the governor, 1 by the Senate President, 1 by the Speaker of the House, 2 elected by its members (1 of whom must be a school employee), and the State Treasurer. Below shows the distribution of various sectors covered:

Active Membership

154,055

School	56.60%
Local	24.60%
State	13.50%
Police & Firemen	5%
Judges	> 1%

Retired Membership

102,733

School	53.50%
Local	20.70%
State	19.90%
Police & Firemen	5.40%
Judges	> 1%

* KPERS retirees have an average age of 70

* 85% of KPERS retirees remain in the state of Kansas

* Riley County has 1,969 retirees with an average monthly benefit of \$1,412

The fund has a 25-year return rate of 8.4%. Since 2015, all new members have been enrolled in a cash benefit plan, rather than the previous defined benefit. There is still much work to be done to ensure its long-term financial security, and the Governor's plans for re-amortization will be hotly debated this year, but it is important to see that this covers neighbors and citizens from all sectors across this state.

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Administration on renovation suggestions to Cedar Crest. Those who do not know, Cedar Crest was built in 1928 by news publisher Frank MacLennan, whose widow donated the home and associated 244 acres of land to the state for public use in 1955 upon her death in accordance with his wishes. Cedar Crest is one of the smallest gubernatorial homes in the United States but has more associated land than any other executive residence. Renovation projects are notoriously difficult because in 1982 it was listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the fact that is a public access building and full-time private family home, and that various administrations have enacted different levels of protection and maintenance for the structure and its historical artifacts. The last major renovation project was begun over 20 years ago in the Graves Administration, completed in 2000, the \$4.4 million project was funded 50/50 through state and privately donated funds. I will keep you all updated as more details are revealed on this proposal.

Department of Corrections

The Corrections Department provided us will updated numbers concerning our inmate population that was the subject of much news and debate last session. Currently, Kansas has an incarceration population of 10,044 inmates. The soon to be completed project at the Lansing facility will provide 512 minimum security beds, and 1,920 maximum and medium security beds; this should help further reduce the overcrowding and violence issues our state has seen in 2018 and 2019. The moving of 120 inmates to a private prison in Arizona ran by CoreCivic this summer, on the vote of the State Finance Council, is not something I would have advocated for, but I hope these new beds will allow us to end that contract and eliminate the need for future use of for profit prisons. I remain concerned by some other numbers that the Acting Secretary provided us:

- 75% of inmate need substance abuse treatment, about 50% of them are reached.
- 40% of inmates are diagnosed with a mental illness
- 140 inmates have completed their treatment for Hepatitis C, but 265 remain in need of treatment.
- Upon release, at least half have unstable housing or are homeless, less than 25% are assisted driving up the risks for recidivism.

These are numbers that the department needs to continue to address, and I look forward to their budget proposals.

Department of Agriculture

We were also briefed by Agriculture Secretary Mike Beam, who provided a review of the 2017 Census of Agriculture in the state. Long a source of pride for the many farmers and ranchers across our state, we rank 5th in the nation in total value of agriculture production:

- 1st in sorghum production (233 million bushels)
- 1st in winter wheat production (277 million bushels)
- 2nd in cropland (29 million acres)
- 3rd in cattle inventory (6.35 million head)
- 10th in soybean production (204 million bushels)

However, the trade war with China has hit our state and nation's farmers especially hard, farm incomes have been in decline for years, but early projections show the Market Facilitation Program has reduced some of these losses. Farmers were met with another challenge in 2019, the record flood levels across the state. The floodplain management team has worked with over 60 local communities to assist in flood recovery. The KDA also assisted with 657 flood policy applications and 287 claims between April and August of 2019. The August 2019 fire at the Tyson plant in Holcomb, Kansas further complicated the picture for Kansas ranchers and cattlemen, along with workers in the Garden City

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operations in January of 2020, they also presented the local fire departments with a donation of new equipment in thanks for the rapid response and support shown in the difficult time.

The KDA also established a new website this year to focus on the mental health issues in the agricultural community. KansasAgStress.org provides resources and support to Kansas farmers and those affected by ag-related stress. Support areas range from stress management and mental health providers to local and national resources for financial and legal challenges.

[Next week](#), we will hold more briefings from agencies like the Kansas Development Finance Authority, the Kansas Water Authority, the Kansas Water Office, and the Kansas Highway Patrol. We will also have a hearing on Tuesday, February 4th on [HB 2439](#).

[Agriculture and Natural Resources Budget](#)

[Next week](#) we begin the Budget Review process for the Board of Accountancy and the Department of Commerce on Monday, February 3rd. Followed by the Department of Credit Unions and the Office of the State Bank Commissioner on Wednesday, February 5th. During this process, it is important to note that three of the four are self-funding agencies, they only use money they make from the institutions they regulate. The one exception will be the Department of Commerce, and I will be looking at past results from Main Street Programs, PRIDE, and the Community Development Division to see how those programs are affecting our rural towns and areas. I will also be focused on funding for Arts Programs, Rural Opportunity Zones, Renewable Energy, Private Activity Bonds, Public Broadcasting, and Bioscience Technology programs for ways to promote and grow our state.

[Agriculture](#)

This week we held hearings on [HB 2432](#), creating a new pesticide disposal program to replace a previously federal program, and on [HB 2451](#) that makes some changes to the existing licensing rules and animal vaccination tag programs.

[Next week](#) we will hold hearing on Monday, February 3rd on [HB 2462](#) – updating provisions to the KDA’s Division of Conservation. We will also be working [HB 2437](#) regarding labeling of imitation meat products. We will be receiving the Annual Grain Commodity Report. And on Wednesday, we will hold a hearing on [HB 2463](#), regarding pesticide and chemigation licensing requirements. Thursday will end the week with a hearing on [HB 2464](#), updating egg repacking requirements, along with work on [HB 2432](#) and [HB 2451](#).

[Floor Votes](#)

- Monday, February 3rd - Final Action on [HB 2426](#).

[Around the Dome](#)

[Local Visitors](#)



[Employment Opportunities](#)

Attached ([here](#)) is the weekly Kansas Works Hot Jobs List for the Manhattan area. Statewide listings may be found [here](#).

This Tuesday, February 4th, there will be a childcare provider hiring event in Fort Riley. More information may be found [here](#).

[Keep In Touch](#)

It is a special honor to serve as your State Representative. I value and need your input on the various issues facing our community and the state government. Please contact me with your comments and questions.

My office address is Room 451-S, 300 SW 10th Avenue, Topeka, KS 66612.

You may reach my office at (785) 296-7657, or the legislative hotline (800) 432-3924 to leave a message.

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