

News from the Capitol



Sydney Carlin - 66th District Representative

300 SW 10th Street
Room 451-S
Topeka, KS 66612

785.296.7657

1650 Sunnyslope Lane

Manhattan, KS 66502
785.539.6612

2021 Legislative Update Week #7

February 22 - February 26, 2021

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HotJobs

The new Manhattan/Junction City area Hot Jobs list may be found [here](#). They are also holding state-wide virtual job fairs.

Honor Some Teens

OPPORTUNITY TO CELEBRATE TEENS IN YOUR COMMUNITY WITH \$5K

Join the Invisalign® brand in their search for **100** deserving teens dedicated to making a difference in their communities to be recognized as Invisalign® ChangeMakers!

Each of these teens will be celebrated at a virtual event and awarded **\$5,000 cash** to fund their service projects or help support their educational or personal goals. Help us celebrate those making a difference by sharing with the teens and parents in your life!

[All teens ages 13 – 19 can apply now through March 31, 2021 by sharing how they're creating positive change in their communities, schools and world.](#)

[Legislative Veto](#)

On Tuesday, Attorney General Schmidt and GOP leaders introduced a bill requesting a constitutional amendment that would give the legislature the ability to block regulations from executive agencies. This essentially creates a “legislative veto.” This is nothing more than another attempt to undermine Governor Kelly’s ability to govern. During a time where Kansans are suffering due to the ongoing pandemic and the coming utility bill crisis, one would think that Attorney General Schmidt and Republican leaders would be more focused on helping Kansans and their families rather than putting their political agendas ahead of people.

["Education Bills"](#)

The [K-12 Education Budget Committee](#) has pushed out bills that drastically alter public education in this state. [HB 2068](#) allows tax-deductible donations for scholarship programs for low-income students to receive private education.

[HB 2119](#) creates the Student Empowerment Act and Fund. This directly diverts public education spending into individual accounts for students that may be spent at a school of their parents’ choice. Instead of traditional at-risk student definitions, it will now be available to any student who had remote learning used during the COVID pandemic. It is a blatant

attack on public education in this state. These bills will divert spending from public schools to private institutions that are not accountable to state standards and may discriminate at will against prospective students and/or their parents.

[Medical Cannabis](#)

I expect to see action on the medical marijuana bill in the coming days. The passage of medicinal marijuana is important for Democrats and Republicans. According to a Republican poll, 66% of Kansans--both Democrats and Republicans--have indicated they supported medical marijuana. Since every surrounding state has legalized either medical or recreational use, now is the time to pass this important legislation to provide Kansans with legal access to a much-needed health option.

[COVID Vaccine Update](#)

The Kansas Department of Health of Environment sent out some good information this week about the vaccination effort across the state. Kansas is currently in Phase 2. All those aged 65+, those in eligible congregate settings and all high-contact critical workers are now prioritized for vaccination, in addition to anyone from Phase 1 who has not yet been vaccinated. For details on those populations, visit the [Kansas Prioritization Plan](#).

Vaccines are coordinated at the county level by local health departments. Each county, through local health departments, decides how their limited supply of the doses will be allocated to the various population groups.

Those in Phase 2 are encouraged to be patient as more information comes out in their local communities. For questions, they should contact their [local health department](#) to learn more about the vaccination process for Phase 2 populations and how they will prioritize within that group or anyone remaining in Phase 1 who has not received the vaccine.

County Allocations

For the week of February 21, approximately 75 counties received vaccine. Due to the shipment sizes of vaccine, rural counties have been receiving a higher rate of vaccine than some urban counties. By decreasing the number of counties to receive vaccine every-other-week week, this will allow the distribution lines to be more equitable across Kansas. This distribution pattern will occur on an every-other-week process. This change impacts 30 counties and 3,000 doses.

Back to School Plan

On February 17, Governor Laura Kelly announced her Back to School Plan, in which counties, who need additional vaccine specifically earmarked for teachers and school staff, will receive additional shipments. This vaccine is in addition to the doses they already receive from KDHE each week.

Counties will not receive the total number of doses needed to vaccinate every teacher in the first shipment. Counties should continue with their prioritization plans as already outlined --- but the state will help meet the need for teachers and staff.

As a reminder, K-12 teachers and staff are included in the current phase - Phase 2 - of the vaccine distribution framework, along with persons aged 65 and older, people living in congregate settings, and other high-contact critical workers.

Federal Retail Pharmacy Program

The [Federal Retail Pharmacy Program](#) began the week of February 8, with the Federal Government sending vaccines directly to enrolled pharmacies. In Kansas, there are 12 pharmacy chains with more than 400 locations enrolled. To date, Kansas pharmacies have received about 17,000 doses. These locations are tasked with vaccinating those ages 65+. Kansas has not received updates concerning future allocations.

[Department of Labor Update](#)

My office has spent a great deal of time responding to Department of Labor issues. I am escalating calls to the Department's Legislative Help Desk immediately to help get constituents callbacks and assistance with their issues. However, the Department is facing calls from the entire state. They currently say to expect 10-business days for callbacks to occur. They have added additional resources to respond more quickly to these requests.

However, due to the outdated mainframe system and multiple new programs, there is no easy fix for the situation.

There are concerns about fraud in the system. Every state in the country is being impacted by this, not just Kansas. They are not occurring at an individual level; rather huge batches of hacked information are being uploaded in bulk by organized fraud groups. KDOL has made tremendous strides in weeding out these fraudulent claims and will continue to do so to protect the Kansas Unemployment system.

A couple of suggestions I can make based on my meetings with the Department officials. If you receive error messages, they recommend using either Apple's **Safari** or Mozilla's **Firefox** browsers. These seem to pop less error messages. I receive calls that people are calling in 600+ times per day. With a system already overloaded by calls, this does little to help an overwhelmed system. The Department suggests calling at random hours rather than 8 am, Noon, and right before 5. Try hours such as 9:35 am or 2:14 pm, 3:17 pm, etc. when there is not such a rush of people trying to call in.

[Around The Dome](#)

[Final Action](#)

This week the full House debated and passed the following bills (Final Vote, my Vote):

- [HB 2262](#) - Eliminating the requirement to provide a permit to cremate in certain circumstances and authorizing electronic permits to cremate. (122-1, Yes)
- [HB 2237](#) - Extending the eligible time period for the rural opportunity zone loan repayment program and income tax credit. (107-16, Yes)
- [SB 27](#) - Amending the Kansas storage tank act to extend the sunsets of certain funds and to increase certain liability and reimbursement amounts. (123-0, Yes)
- [HB 2254](#) - Increasing the monetary cap on irrevocable prearranged funeral agreements to \$10,000. (123-0, Yes)

- [HB 2191](#) - Increasing criminal penalties for the crimes of riot and incitement to riot when the crime occurs in a correctional facility. (123-0, Yes)
- [HB 2078](#) - Suspending statutory speedy trial rights until May 1, 2024, in all criminal cases filed prior to the effective date of this act and eliminating such rights in any criminal case filed on or after the effective date of this act. (107-17, Yes)
- [HB 2052](#) - Authorizing legislative assistants and committee assistants to accept gifts of not to exceed \$150 in value each legislative session from certain legislators (119-5, Yes).
- [HB 2243](#) - Adjusting the frequency of the KPERS actuarial experience study. (123-1, Yes)
- [HB 2093](#) - Increasing criminal penalties for fleeing or attempting to elude a police officer when operating a stolen vehicle and making fleeing or attempting to elude a police officer evidence of intent to commit theft of a vehicle. (124-0, Yes)
- [HB 2192](#) - Authorizing court services officers and community corrections officers to provide a certification of identification to offenders for use to obtain a new driver's license. (124-0, Yes)
- [HB 2136](#) - Updating certain statutes relating to the regulation of the business of insurance; granting the commissioner of insurance certain investigative powers. (124-0, Yes)
- [HB 2244](#) - Establishing requirements for the effective disposal of industrial hemp and requiring industrial hemp processors to register with the state fire marshal. (97-27, Yes)
- [HB 2277](#) - Clarifying the definition of possession in the Kansas criminal code. (166-8, Yes)
- [HB 2175](#) - Creating the Dwayne Peaslee technical training center district. (122-2, Yes)
- [SB 39](#) - Changing Kansas department of agriculture division of animal health license, permit and registration renewal deadlines and allowing the animal health commissioner to recover the actual cost of official calfhood vaccination tags. (117-7, Yes – Heading to Conference Committee)
- [HB 2101](#) - Extending transfers from the expanded lottery act revenues fund to the university engineering initiative. (112-12, Yes)

- [SB 29](#) - Updating the version of risk-based capital instructions in effect. (124-0, Yes)
- [SB 40](#) – Updating provisions related to the Kansas department of agriculture division of conservation. (123-1, Yes – Heading to Conference Committee)
- [HB 2058](#) - Allowing reciprocity to recognize out-of-state licenses to carry a concealed handgun. This bill was amended on the floor to allow 18-20 year olds to carry concealed weapons. I will be voting NO on this today.

[Upcoming Issues](#)

We are almost halfway through the 2021 Legislative Session and have many important issues to address. Below are some issues expected to come up in the coming weeks.

- [SB 22](#) – (a Brownback Tax plan copy 2.0) - cutting taxes for giant corporations that return to Kansas from other countries but not for hardworking Kansas families.
- [SB 61/HB 2068](#) and [HB 2119](#) - education bills that would funnel tax funds to private schools and away from public education that serve all Kansas children.

[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 Street, Topeka, KS 66612.

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

Email at sydney.carlin@house.ks.gov

Please follow [my legislative activity](#) or the [entire session](#).

Thank you!



Sydney Carlin - 66th District Representative

www.sydneycarlinforkansas.com



#RepSydneyCarlin



@RepSydneyCarlin



Website

Our mailing address is:

Sydney Carlin

Kansas House of Representatives

300 SW 10th Street
Suite 451-S
Topeka, KS 66612

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Sydney Carlin, State Representative, 66th District · 1650 Sunnyslope Lane · Manhattan, KS 66502 · USA

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