

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 #2

January 18 - January 22, 2020

Week #3

January 25 - January 29, 2020

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Kansas Day

As I write this, I am realizing today (Friday, January 29th) is Kansas Day! Our amazing state was admitted to the Union 160 years ago today.



Then as I was walking to a meeting, I passed the ultimate mural "Tragic Prelude" by John Steuart Curry.



Since the past week has seen the death of two pioneering Americans who were so important to the Civil Rights Movement in this nation, this painting took on special meaning this afternoon. Kansas was admitted under one of the most polarizing times in our nation's

history. With Hank Aaron and Cicely Tyson's passing this week, I think of what memories we would have missed out on had things gone differently.

Since the Capitol has restricted access due to COVID precautions, I wanted to take a moment to share an excellent painting. Here's hoping on Kansas' 161st birthday, everything will be back to normal and you can view the mural in person!

[Potential Amendment to the Kansas Constitution](#)

[HCR 5003](#) sends Constitutional Amendment to the Public for a Primary Election Day Vote (but it is being called a Special Election) in August of 2022. The referendum vote was straight along party lines - 86 Republicans to 38 Democrats.

HCR 5003 passed the House (86-38) on Friday, January 22nd. Floor debate centered around the question of whether the Constitutional Amendment as presented would allow for women to seek abortion in the event of "Rape, Incest or the Life and Health of the Mother."

The proponents of the Amendment legislation, when questioned repeatedly, said "it is covered" (sic)(now). "It's covered" (sic) (now). What they would not say is that because a woman's right is currently protected as a fundamental right in the Kansas Constitution, they are spending millions of dollars to elect like-minded legislators and get their voters to the polls. Should the Amendment pass a public referendum it will allow Legislative restrictions to change from year to year on women's reproductive rights. It will now be up to the public to decide the question. During the next 18 months we will see time and again billboards, postcards and graphic advertising depicting the horrors of aborted fetuses.

The framers of the Amendment will NOT remind us of stories about the many thousands of women who died seeking back alley abortions prior to *the Roe V Wade* decision of the United States Supreme Court. Despite the name of this legislation being "value them both" **as I read it the kinds of things that supposedly "value" a woman's life are not equal to lifesaving medical procedures that doctors can now legally perform to "save" a woman's life.** While insisting on holding the public vote on a traditional Primary election day (which historically only draws 30% of Kansas voters to the polls) and reminded of the traditional low turnout, the carrier of the bill said "That is what we want."

I voted against the Constitutional Amendment. The process is long and lengthy, and the campaigning will be ugly and confusing. I urge you now to study the issue as I have had to do as your Representative. I truly believe that we must do what we can do to protect life in all its forms. One of the most important things we can do for families is to protect the life of their mother. And I believe that the government should not interfere in medical decisions when families are in crisis.

[Criminal Justice Reform](#)

I serve on the [Joint Committee on Corrections and Juvenile Justice Oversight](#). During the 2020 Interim period, we recommended multiple bills be re-introduced this session. On Thursday, January 28th, the first of those recommended bills passed the House (123-0).

[HB 2026](#) allows for district and county prosecutors to enter into agreements with the court to establish diversion agreements and supervision for drug treatment instead of prison for those with drug addictions. Treating addiction as an illness rather than a crime, is a necessary first step in reversing the rates of drug abuse and drug convictions that affect our state. Addicts can receive real drug treatment and reduce recidivism rates more effectively than serving time in prison.

[A Step Forward for Indigenous People](#)

On Thursday, January 28th, the Kansas House overwhelmingly passed [HB 2008](#) (123-0). This provides for the attorney general to coordinate training for law enforcement agencies on missing and murdered indigenous people. In the [Federal and State Affairs Committee](#), they held a hearing over [HB 2006](#). This bill would change the designation of Columbus Day to Indigenous People Day. Unfortunately, at this moment, we are unsure if the bill will receive a vote in committee.

[Gun Legislation](#)

On Wednesday, January 27th, the Federal and State Affairs Committee held three hearings on bills that pertained to firearms. [HB 2058](#) allows for reciprocity to recognize out-of-state licenses to carry a concealed handgun. [HB 2059](#) would provide reciprocity for licenses to carry concealed handguns and create two classes of concealed carry licenses. [HB 2089](#) would authorize the attorney general to issue an alternative license to carry a concealed handgun to qualified applicants during a declared state of disaster emergency. All three have yet to pass out of committee.

[Unemployment Insurance Reminder](#)

A reminder for anyone who has had their work disrupted by the COVID pandemic. If you have received Unemployment Insurance (UI) benefits, you will probably be receiving a 1099-G form this year for your taxes. KDOL is prohibited from automatically withholding taxes from UI benefits without a claimant's permission. We recognize this could create problems for claimants who have not withheld taxes from their 2020 benefits. The amount

of tax withholding is determined by state and federal tax laws and the agency is unable to make monetary adjustments to the tax notice unless an error is found. If you have a dispute with your IRS Form 1099-G, you may contact the KDOL Tax Call Center at 785-575-1461. If the amount shown on a claimant's 1099-G is incorrect, send a written dispute to KDOL at:

1099 Inquiry
Kansas Department of Labor
401 SW Topeka Blvd.
Topeka, KS 66603-3182

Judicial Branch

Kansas Supreme Court Chief Justice **Marla Luckert** issued a new administrative order to continue suspending statutes of limitation, statutory time standards, deadlines, and time limitations begun under earlier orders in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Chief Justice Luckert's action follows the Legislature's ratification and continuation of the COVID-19 state of disaster emergency through March 31, 2021.

Justice **Luckert** spoke to the members of the Appropriations Committee this week about the state of the Judiciary and the adjustments that were implemented by the Judicial Branch court system to provide justice proceedings during the Pandemic. Remote hearings, extensive teleconferencing, and extending deadlines continue today to keep everyone in the court system safe during these important procedures. She stressed the need to hire about 70 new court services officers and increase salaries for judges and court workers.

Department of Labor

During his report to the Appropriations Committee, Acting Secretary of Labor, Brett Flachsbarth was grilled by members to explain why the department has not been able to overcome problems with distributing unemployment benefits. Since the start of the pandemic, the Kansas Department of Labor has been struggling— to process a record number of unemployment claims with 40-year old IT systems, implementing changes in federal legislation into the antiquated system (i.e., additional \$600 per week), a record number of claims and an even higher volume of calls. There have also been record numbers of fraudulent claims that seem to have been dumped into the system in batches. The equipment is insufficient; the number of personnel is inadequate and there isn't enough equipment to do everything that is required right now.- We have very good people working very hard to get money out to those who work in Kansas businesses.

Since March 15, 2020 KDOL has paid out over 3.9 million weekly claims totaling over \$2.6 Billion between regular unemployment and the federal pandemic programs. For more information, or to apply for unemployment benefits, go to www.GetKansasBenefits.gov.

Solutions-Between today and Tuesday morning (Feb 2) the Labor Department is **taking the servers offline to deploy a new security system** to fight unemployment insurance fraud. This new security system will deploy identity verification software for unemployment insurance accounts and claims. These upgrades will identify and stop the flood of fraudulent claims Kansas and other states across the country have been fighting, so the team at the Department of Labor will have more time to help unemployed Kansans.

KDOL expects to see a decline or outright elimination of fraudulent benefit notices that individuals and businesses have been receiving from KDOL. The system will provide two-factor authentication to provide more secure log in and access to accounts.

To ensure unemployment benefit payments are not made on fraudulent claims, KDOL will hold payment of Regular Unemployment benefits until the new system is operational on February 2, 2021. **Claimants will get any back pay owed because of the hold at that time.**

Benefit payments to the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) program will not be impacted by the upgrade, but PUA claimants must verify their identity within the new system when it becomes operational.

Once the new identification verification system is in place, every claimant will be required to verify his or her identity by answering questions specific to the person's own credit history. Once an identity is verified, the system will prompt the claimant to setup two-factor authentication for her or his benefit account moving forward. This additional layer of security is an important factor in protecting KDOL unemployment insurance and enable KDOL to make payments more quickly to legitimate claimants.

[HotJobs](#)

Kansas Works continues to hold virtual job fairs for those in search of employment. To view January's Hot Jobs Listings click [here](#). or click on the image below for information about the statewide job fairs.



KANSASWORKS VIRTUAL JOB FAIRS

2020	DECEMBER - 8, 9, 10	FEBRUARY 23, 24, 25
	JANUARY 26, 27, 28	MARCH 23, 24, 25

JOB SEEKER PRE-REGISTRATION IS OPEN FOR DECEMBER 8-10:
<https://KansasworksVirtualJobFair.EasyVirtualFair.com>

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[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](mailto:sydney.carlin@house.ks.gov) at sydney.carlin@house.ks.gov

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

Thank you!

A stylized, cursive signature of Sydney Carlin in black ink, centered within a white rectangular box.

Sydney Carlin - 66th District Representative



My mailing address is:

Sydney Carlin

Kansas House of Representatives

300 SW 10th Street

Suite 451-S

Topeka, KS 66612

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