

News from the Capitol



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In This Issue

- [#AxeTheFoodTax Gets a Hearing](#)
- [House Republicans Pass Gerrymandered Map "Ad Astra 2"](#)
- [The Ornate Box Turtle](#)
- Keep in Touch

House Democratic Caucus Newsletter – Week 3

This week, #AxeTheFoodTax continues to move through the legislative process. A controversial redistricting map, "Ad Astra 2," was passed out after much debate and pushback from House Democrats and a few Republicans. Finally, the week closed out with a hearing on a bill to protect the state reptile: the

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#AxeTheFoodTax Gets a Hearing

The House Democrats’ food tax cut bill, [HB 2487](#), received a hearing on Tuesday, January 25. The bill **cuts the state sales tax on food to 0%** from 6.5%. The tax has been in place since the 1930s and **raised 10 times**, most recently under former **Governor Sam Brownback**. If the bill passes, the average Kansas family will **save \$500 per year**.

Last year, the legislature again cut corporate taxes. Now it is time for **hardworking families to see tax relief**.

House Republicans Pass Gerrymandered Map “Ad Astra 2”

On Wednesday, January 26, the “[Ad Astra 2](#)” map passed the House on a 79-37 vote one day after a four-hour [debate](#). Now the map is in **Governor Kelly’s** hands.

All House Democrats opposed the map. From the date of introduction to passage was only **five days**, leaving little time for the public to study the map and submit feedback to the committee. Considering the promises from Republican leadership of “**unprecedented transparency**,” this was a disappointing timeline.

Ad Astra 2 **places Lawrence into the Big First**, a heavily rural district with stark differences in economy, geography, socioeconomic status, racial makeup, and partisanship, among other demographics. Lawrence was carved with meticulous attention out of Douglas county -- no other parts of Douglas were moved. It is noteworthy that of the 650+ pieces of testimony received throughout the redistricting process, not a single member of the public called for Lawrence to join the first congressional district. Many of us saw this as a **textbook example of gerrymandering**.

The map also **contradicts public input** regarding the third congressional district. Hundreds of Kansans **demand the metro cores of Wyandotte and Johnson county stay intact**; despite this clear plea, House Republicans hacked the counties in half. A line was drawn through Wyandotte county to [carve up a neighborhood](#) -- Stony Point -- south of Interstate 70 and east of the Kansas Speedway. The boundaries **divide the community along racial lines**, another **clear-cut example of gerrymandering**.

Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee

A [bill](#) to prohibit the **unlawful collection or possession** of the **ornate box turtle** had a [hearing](#) on Thursday, January 27 in the Agriculture committee. Kansas designated the ornate box turtle the **official state reptile** in 1986. Benjamin Reed, Assistant Professor of Biology, Washburn University, testified in favor of the bill. He said, "Culturally, the Ornate Box Turtle have been celebrated I religion and mythology throughout their range and are considered a symbol of longevity, tenacity, and wisdom..... ..Turtles are one of the smallest and most imperiled vertebrate groups in the world today. They have outlived the dinosaur and multiple ice ages....yet human activity (such as poaching which this bill is directly addressing) remains inexcusably permissible for many turtle species including the Ornate Box Turtle. The loss of the ornate box turtles in Kansas would be devastating for local ecosystems and humans alike." Spencer Tomb, retired Professor of Biology, KSU brought a shell of the Ornate Box Turtle to the meeting which he has made into a Turkey call, demonstrating some of the uses of the turtle shells he has found in Kansas. Native Americans use the shells of dead turtles as bowls and to make musical instruments. He warned of unintended consequences in some of the language in the bill. He said, "There are current protections of reptiles including the Ornate Box Turtle." The committee asked for a survey of the turtle population and will consider ways to offer protection to the State Reptile. "**Save the turtles**" could be heard passing through the halls after the committee adjourned.



[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 on a white background.

Sydney Carlin - 66th District Representative

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