

NEWSLETTERS



KANSAS LEGISLATIVE INSIGHTS NEWSLETTER | MARCH 24, 2025

It's bracket season under the dome — and every play counts before the final buzzer sounds. With the clock winding down and the court in session, Kansas lawmakers are running a full-court press in the final week of the 2025 session. Policy proposals are advancing like motions, and conference committees are the arena where deals are argued, settled, or sent into overtime.

TAX TUSSLE TURNS TACTICAL

As the Kansas Legislature approaches the final stretch of its session, lawmakers in both chambers are doubling down on efforts to shape the future of property tax policy. With competing proposals in play, House and Senate leaders have turned to legislative maneuvering to gain the upper hand.

At issue: how to slow down rising property tax valuations. Senators are pressing for a firm 3% annual cap on growth. House members propose a more flexible formula that uses a six-year rolling average or current fair market value, whichever is lower, to provide more predictable assessments.

The Senate's move came first. The Senate Tax Committee reworked House Concurrent Resolution 5011, stripping its original contents and substituting the Senate's appraisal cap language. That provision had already cleared the Senate floor earlier in the session, positioning it for potential reconciliation with the House version.

Days later, the House adopted a similar strategy. On the House floor, Rep. Adam Smith (R-Weskan), chair of the House Committee on Taxation, amended Senate Bill 35, removing the Senate's original proposal to eliminate state property tax levies and replacing it with language from the House's preferred plan, House Bill 2396. The updated bill includes the creation of the ASTRA Fund, restores the statewide mill levy for schools, and adds transparency measures like recorded votes when jurisdictions exceed revenue-neutral limits. Smith described the change as a strategic step to reinforce the House's footing heading into conference.

Meanwhile, House Speaker Pro Tem Blake Carpenter (R-Derby) has proposed a constitutional amendment aimed at longer-term tax relief. His plan calls for a "Freedom from Taxes Fund," fueled by eliminating certain sales tax exemptions, to eventually phase out both income and property taxes.

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Whether these procedural pivots bring lawmakers closer to consensus, or push them further apart, remains to be seen as discussions continue and work in the conference committee commences.

COMMITTEE CRAFTING COMPROMISE

The Kansas Senate has approved its version of the state budget, advancing a \$27.05 billion spending package and sending it back to the House to begin conference committee work on SB 125.

The budget bill provides funding for core state functions, including K-12 education, higher education, transportation, public safety, and social services. It also includes an across-the-board reduction for state agencies and salary adjustments for state employees. Conference committee members are working to reconcile 232 differences between the House and Senate positions before the budget returns for final votes in both chambers.

Senate Sub for Sub for House Bill 2007 includes \$10.82 billion in State General Fund (SGF) spending for fiscal year 2025, slightly above the House proposal of \$10.81 billion. In fiscal year 2026, the Senate scales back SGF spending to \$10.58 billion, while the House proposes \$10.57 billion. Although the SGF totals are close, each chamber takes a different approach to priorities.

The Senate version emphasizes one-time expenditures, including \$50 million in loans for aircraft maintenance operations, \$55.5 million for Kansas Highway Patrol facility improvements, and \$10 million for adult behavioral health hospital beds. It also provides \$28 million for contract nursing staff at Larned and Osawatomie state hospitals.

In contrast, the House includes a \$10 million increase for special education, maintains continuous Medicaid eligibility for caregivers, and funds mental health staffing and broadband expansion. The Senate eliminates continuous Medicaid eligibility and adds provisions requiring state agencies to eliminate diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) roles and programs as a condition for funding.

Both chambers support significant infrastructure and education investments, including \$179 million for bridge modernization, over \$100 million for capital improvements at Kansas universities, and \$71 million in federal funding for the Wichita Biomedical Campus.

As conference committee members begin deliberations this week, they must bridge differences in policy direction, funding levels, and agency oversight to finalize the state's budget for fiscal years 2025 and 2026. The full Senate and House will vote on the resulting compromise, which will then go to Gov. Laura Kelly for approval or line-item vetoes.

A detailed comparison of House and Senate positions compared to HB 2007 as introduced and House positions on SB 125 can be viewed [here](#).

SENATE KICKS CLOCK CHAOS TO THE CURB

Kansas is on track to ditch the twice-yearly time adjustment or clock change. Senate Bill 1, the first bill introduced in the 2025 Legislative Session, passed the Senate 33–7 on the final day to consider bills from non-exempt committees.

Sponsored by Sen. Kenny Titus (R-Manhattan), SB 1 would move Kansas to a permanent standard time, ending the biannual time changes, but only if Missouri enacts similar legislation. In addition, if Congress passes a law requiring permanent daylight saving time nationwide, Kansas would automatically transition to year-round daylight saving time.

Supporters of the bill argue that permanent standard time improves public health by supporting natural sleep cycles and reducing risks for children commuting to school in the dark. Many also believe simply ending the time shift

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would yield benefits, regardless of which time standard is adopted.

The Office of the Secretary of State opposed the bill's directive to monitor federal and Missouri laws for relevant changes. A representative of the Kansas Association of Broadcasters provided neutral testimony, citing concerns about reduced morning broadcast hours under standard time unless federal regulations are updated.

It will now move to the House of Representatives where it is likely to sit until it can be picked up again during the 2026 Legislative Session.

KEY LEGISLATIVE DEADLINES

The Kansas Legislature enters its final week with major policy decisions pending and a condensed timeline driving urgency.

- Monday, March 24 – Friday, March 28: Conference committees will reconcile bills that passed in different forms
- Friday, March 28 (Day 75): Scheduled first adjournment
- Thursday, April 10 (Day 88): Veto Session Convenes

For a full list of current bills in conference, visit: [Kansas Legislature Conference Committees](#).

CALENDAR OF ACTIVITY MARCH 24-28

Monday, March 24

- Senate Public Health and Welfare Committee
 - Hearing on HB 2223: Modifying certain provisions of the optometry law relating to scope of practice, definitions, and credentialing requirements.
- Senate Federal and State Affairs Committee
 - Reconsideration of S Sub HB 2054: Increasing the limits on certain campaign contributions under the Campaign Finance Act and eliminating limits on contributions to candidates in certain circumstances.
- Senate Judiciary Committee
 - Confirmation hearing on: Lori A. Bolton Fleming, Judge, Kansas Court of Appeals.

BILL INTRODUCTIONS

HOUSE BILLS

House Concurrent Resolution

HCR 5016: United States Constitution. This concurrent resolution, sponsored by the Committee on Federal and State Affairs chaired by Rep. Tom Kessler (R-Wichita), would urge the Kansas attorney general to join the efforts of other states to uphold the Constitution of the United States of America, the founding principles of Separation of Powers and the Appointments Clause, and hold Elon Musk accountable for unlawful executive action. This bill has been referred to the Committee on Federal and State Affairs.

BILL TRACKING HISTORY

A history of the live bills that we are tracking as of March 24, 2025, can be found [here](#).

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Kansas Legislative Insights is a publication developed by the government affairs & public policy law practice group of Foulston Siefkin LLP. It is designed to inform business executives, human resources and government relations professionals, and general counsel about current developments occurring in current Kansas legislation. Published regularly during the Kansas legislative session and periodically when the legislature is not in session, it focuses on issues involving healthcare, insurance, public finance, taxation, financial institutions, business & economic development, energy, real estate & construction, environmental, agribusiness, and employment. Bill summaries are by necessity brief, however, for additional information on any issue before the Kansas Legislature, contact Foulston Siefkin's government affairs & public policy law practice group leader, C. Edward Watson, II, at 316.291.9589 or cewatson@foulston.com. Learn more about the authors below:

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