

NEWSLETTERS



KANSAS LEGISLATIVE INSIGHTS NEWSLETTER | NOVEMBER 7, 2024

POST-ELECTION KANSAS LEGISLATURE PREPS FOR 2025

GENERAL ELECTION RESULTS

Turnout Falls Short of 2020

Kansas voters set unprecedented turnout numbers in the 2024 General Election during the early voting period, marking the first election for the Kansas Senate and the second for the Kansas House of Representatives since 2022 redistricting.

Early voting surpassed half a million ballots, and the Secretary of State predicted record-breaking participation. However, unofficial numbers reveal voter turnout at 64.2%, down from 71% in 2020. The national contest between Vice President Kamala Harris and former president Donald Trump, coupled with Kansas legislative races, generated significant local interest.

Republicans Maintain Supermajorities

Republicans maintained their legislative supermajorities in Kansas legislative races, soundly defeating efforts led by Governor Laura Kelly to target several seats mostly in Johnson County. Counting provisional ballots and late-arriving mail ballots will continue until Friday; however, the results remain unofficial till December 2.

Notably, 57 Kansas legislative seats – over a third of all races – were uncontested, including eight Senate and 49 House seats. Here's a list of Kansas House and Senate Candidates who are uncontested in the General Election. While this ensured victories in those districts, competition was intense in contested races, where Democrats were unsuccessful in their attempts to break supermajorities in both the House and Senate.

Kansas Legislative Races

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The Kansas Legislature remains in Republican control. The House and Senate have veto-proof majorities, allowing them to override gubernatorial vetoes. The 2025 Legislature will see six new faces in the Kansas Senate and 12 new members in the Kansas House of Representatives.

Kansas Senate Republicans expanded their supermajority after unofficial results showed they secured two additional seats. Key wins include Lansing Republican Jeff Klemp's narrow victory over incumbent Democrat Jeff Pittman of Leavenworth (assuming Klemp's 57-vote lead holds) and challenger Republican Brad Starnes's win over incumbent Democrat Usha Reddi of Manhattan. Republican incumbents in Johnson County also defended their seats; notably Kellie Warren, Mike Thompson, and Adam Thomas.

If these results hold through final counting, Republicans will control 31 of 40 Senate seats.

In the Kansas House of Representatives, Republicans strengthened their supermajority by flipping three seats and defending key suburban districts. Key Democratic losses included Representatives Jason Probst (Hutchinson), Allison Houglund (Olathe), and Dennis Miller (Olathe). Despite substantial campaign funding for the Democrats, Republicans retained contested areas. Personal controversies also emerged in several races.

It appears Republicans will control 88 of 125 seats in the House.

What's Next?

The Board of Canvassers in each county will certify unofficial results within 13 days of the general election (November 18). On December 2, the Kansas Board of Canvassers will certify results.

Despite the energy and money spent on campaigns, the Republican/Democrat breakdown of the Kansas Legislature will largely reflect its current makeup.

In early December, the newly elected Legislature will select new leaders for its respective caucuses and begin organizing matters. Leadership campaigns will now commence.

Kansas Congressional Races

The Kansas Congressional delegation had several higher-profile races. Congressman Tracey Mann won decisively against Democrat Paul Buskirk in the "Big First" District, securing a return to Congress.

Former Attorney General Derek Schmidt-R successfully won the 2nd Congressional District race against former Congresswoman Nancy Boyda-D.

Incumbent Congresswoman Sharice Davids, D-Shawnee, faced Dr. Prasanth Reddy, R-Lenexa, in the greater Kansas City area's 3rd Congressional District and won.

Incumbent Congressman Ron Estes, R-Wichita, had no primary opposition and won against Democrat Esau Freeman.

At the national level, both the House of Representatives and U.S. Senate appear to be in Republican control, which could boost the stature of our Republican members of Congress and existing Republican Senators Jerry Moran and Roger Marshall, who were not up for re-election.

BACK UNDER THE DOME

Overhaul of Budget Process Continues

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Kansas lawmakers are overhauling the state's budget process by creating a new 23-member Legislative Budget Committee. Meeting in December, this committee will craft the fiscal year 2026 budget, giving lawmakers a head start before the 2025 session. The move shifts more control to the legislature, starting with the previous year's spending as a baseline rather than waiting for the governor's proposal. Lawmakers aim to improve oversight and give themselves three additional weeks to review budget requests.

House Speaker Dan Hawkins supports the change, calling it an opportunity for legislators to take full responsibility as appropriators. Critics, including Gov. Kelly's administration, express concerns about added pressure on staff and potential confusion. Despite concerns, proponents believe this new process will lead to more efficient and transparent budgeting. Additionally, the changes will limit last-minute budget provisos, requiring them to go through standard committee review.

Medical Marijuana Under Discussion

Kansas lawmakers are currently debating the pros and cons of legalizing marijuana, as the state remains one of the few without any form of legal cannabis. During a recent medical marijuana committee hearing, officials and experts discussed the potential impacts of legalization, including regulatory challenges, law enforcement concerns, and economic effects. While some state agencies have begun preparing for possible legalization, members of law enforcement voiced concerns about crime and public safety. Proponents argue that legalization could reduce criminal activity and provide better oversight. The committee is expected to reconvene for further discussions before making any legislative proposals.

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, employment, and workers compensation. 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:

C. Edward Watson, II

Editor and Government Affairs & Public Policy Law Team Leader
316.291.9589
cewatson@foulston.com | [View Bio](#)

As a partner at Foulston Siefkin, Eddie represents clients in matters before state regulatory commissions, courts, and local government bodies. He has built and maintained relationships with key individuals – including lobbyists, elected and appointed officials, and staff members – that prove valuable in advancing clients' interests and issues. Drawing on his experience as a regional government affairs attorney for AT&T in Chicago, he helps clients navigate the maze of federal policies and agencies, advises on how processes work in Washington, and provides introductions to those who can help them accomplish their goals.

Susan (Sue) Peterson, PhD

Contributing Author and Government Affairs Consultant
785.341.6717

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speterson@foulston.com | [View bio](#)

Sue, a government affairs consultant to Foulston Siefkin's Government Affairs & Public Policy practice group, is a strategic advocate, advisor, and connection to the Kansas Legislature, government agencies, and elected officials. She has built a robust and well-established network of state and federal lawmakers, corporate/academic leaders, and policymakers nationwide. She earned a Bachelor of Science in political science from Kansas State University, a Master of Public Administration from the University of Kansas, and a Doctorate in Curriculum and Instruction from KSU. Before joining Foulston, Sue served as Kansas State University's chief government relations officer for 34 years; her experience also includes staff positions in Kansas' executive and legislative branches.

Eric L. Sexton, PhD

Contributing Author and Government Affairs Consultant

316.371.7553

esexton@foulston.com | [View bio](#)

Eric, a government affairs consultant to Foulston Siefkin's Government Affairs & Public Policy practice group, has nearly 30 years' experience providing strategic direction and government relations services. As Wichita State University's governmental relations leader for 18 years, Eric developed lasting relationships at the local, state, and federal Government level around Kansas. Eric holds a doctorate in political science from the University of Kansas and a masters in public administration from Wichita State University, complementing his undergraduate business degree from Wichita State.

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