



KANSAS LEGISLATIVE INSIGHTS NEWSLETTER | OCTOBER 28, 2021

October 28, 2021

INTERIM COMMITTEES

Interim Committees have been regularly meeting this month to start finalizing recommendations for the 2022 Legislature. The interim topics cover a wide array of issues from child-support enforcement, child welfare, juvenile justice, mental health, and liquor law to name a few. Interim committees will finalize their reports and recommendations in November and December. The Consensus Revenue Estimating Group meets in November to look at the economic trends in the state and review the Kansas revenue estimates used in the budget process.

On Oct. 11, the Joint Committee on State Building Construction voted 6-4 to recommend to the State Finance Council to turn the Docking State Office building into a three-story event center with either new construction or renovation. The committee approved \$129 million in bonds to fund the project. The Joint Committee also recommended building the new Kansas Department of Health and Environment laboratory on the Kansas Neurological Institute (KNI) grounds.

Cybersecurity and security have been a recurring theme in several hearings in addition to the ongoing unemployment fraud issue. The Legislative Post Audit report outlined the lack of basic security precautions in school-district computer systems. The audit recommended that the Kansas State Board of Education consider developing minimum cybersecurity standards for school districts. The audit was released on the heels of the cyber-attack on Pottawatomie County. In early October, county officials confirmed the payment of \$71,250 to the hackers to restore access to their IT systems. Hackers originally demanded the county pay \$1 million.

The Joint Committee on Kansas Security Committee voted to ask legislative leaders to provide security training and drills for legislators and their staff in the event of an active-shooter scenario in the Statehouse. Joint Committee members stated that legislators, staff, and others should be educated on when to run, when to hide, and how to avoid injury.

The Legislative Coordinating Council approved the budgets for legislative operations for the 2022 session and the next fiscal year. The LCC authorized continued negotiations with Dell Computer for a new lease on computers for legislators and staff.

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LEGISLATOR FILES NOTICE OF TEMPORARY ABSENCE

House Majority Whip Rep. Blake Carpenter, R-Derby, has filed a notice of temporary absence from the Kansas Legislature due to military orders. After his projected six months of military service, he intends to return to the Legislature. Rep. Carpenter is a second lieutenant in the Air Force in the Kansas National Guard. Procedurally, a temporary replacement will be selected by precinct committee members of the 81st House District.

GOLD STAR MEMORIAL

The Kansas Capitol Preservation Committee unanimously endorsed adding a memorial to the statehouse grounds honoring Gold Star families at the request of Hershel “Woody” Williams. He is the only living Medal of Honor recipient of World War II. The 98-year-old Williams received the Medal of Honor from President Truman for his service on Iwo Jima. He made the recommendation to Gov. Laura Kelly during the dedication of the Gold Star Families Memorial Monument at Olathe Veterans Memorial Park in 2020. Gov. Kelly worked with the Governor’s Military Council on the advance planning for a monument. The proposal will be recommended to the 2022 Legislature for consideration.

REDISTRICTING UPDATE

House and Senate Redistricting Committees have scheduled virtual listening tours in each congressional district between November 22 to November 25. There will be two to four locations in each congressional district. Locations selected will offer the technology required for virtual testimony.

Below is a preliminary schedule with potential locations in each congressional district.

- **District 2**, Nov. 22, 5 to 7:30 p.m., with virtual meetings in Atchison, on a Native American Reservation, Ottawa, and Independence.
- **District 1**, Nov. 23, 5:30-7:30 p.m., with virtual sites in Emporia, Great Bend, Liberal, and McPherson.
- **District 4**, Nov. 29, 5:30-7:30 p.m., with virtual sites in Newton and El Dorado.
- **District 3**, Nov. 30, 5:30-7:30 p.m., with virtual sites in Stilwell and Bonner Springs.

MASTERTON JUGGLES COMMITTEE CHAIRS

On Oct. 22, Senate President Ty Masterson, R-Andover, announced three new committee chairs. In May, the Senate Republican caucus had removed Sen. Gene Suellentrop, R-Wichita, as Majority Leader, and replaced him with Sen. Larry Alley. The responsibilities of Majority Leader do not leave time for Sen. Alley to continue as chair of the Senate Federal and Affairs Committee. President Masterson announced Sen. Rob Olson, R-Olathe, as the new Senate Federal and State Affairs Committee Chair. Senator Olson served as the chair of the Senate Commerce Committee last session. The new chair of the Senate Commerce Committee is Sen. Renee Erickson, R-Wichita. Senate Vice President Rick Wilburn, R-McPherson, will be the chair of the Senate Redistricting Committee.

UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION UPDATE

On Oct. 25, the Unemployment Compensation/Modernization and Improvement Council voted 7-4 to request that the Legislative Coordinating Council approve new bidding for the massive update of the Kansas Department of Labor’s unemployment program computer system. After hearing from several bidders on the project in September, the panel never got a firm answer on whether replacing the 40-year-old system with new machines or just adding new programs to the machines would be the best approach. The Labor Council proposal would provide a 30-day extension for the filing of bids for the computer replacement and safeguards to stop fraudulent unemployment compensation applications. The number of applications has sharply dropped with the end of federal benefits, making the delay feasible.

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REP. JENNINGS DIES

On Oct. 27, 2021, Rep. Russ Jennings, R-Lakin, died from cancer. He announced in July that he had been diagnosed with advanced cancer and was starting treatment. He also announced that he would not seek re-election in 2022. Rep. Jennings served in the Kansas House since 2013 and chaired the House Corrections/Juvenile Justice Committee. The Foulston family extends our deepest sympathies to his family.

Kansas Legislative Insights is a publication developed by the Governmental Relations & Public Policy Law practice group of Foulston Siefkin LLP. It is designed to inform business executives, human resources and governmental relations professionals, and general counsel about current developments occurring in current Kansas legislation. Published regularly during the Kansas legislative 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 Governmental Relations & Public Policy Law practice group leader, James P. Rankin at 785.233.3600 or jrankin@foulston.com. Learn more about the authors below:

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As a partner at Foulston Siefkin, Eddie represents clients in matters before state regulatory commissions, courts, and local governmental 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 governmental 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.

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PRACTICE AREAS

- Governmental Affairs & Public Policy Law