

Weekly Legislative Report -----Kansas Legislature 2021

Weekly Legislative Report January 11-15, 2021

The Kansas Legislature gavelled in for the 2021 Legislative Session on Monday afternoon and quickly got to work. What is usually a slow week where newly elected legislators get settled into their offices and learn their way around the Statehouse was instead the legislative process unfolding at lightning speed. So much so that two rather complex bills were introduced, heard, worked, and passed the floor by week's end. In fear of a potential virus outbreak and early adjournment, leaders are working through their priority items in double-time.

Governor's State of the State Address

Governor Laura Kelly gave her third State of the State Address on Tuesday evening. Instead of in front of a packed House Chamber, however, she spoke to Kansans virtually through her Facebook page and public television stations.

She touched on a bit of everything including vaccine distribution, new jobs coming to Kansas, the need for broadband access for agriculture, support for infrastructure, even getting kids back in school. As far as her agenda items for this year, she didn't get too specific. The governor will continue to push for Medicaid expansion, intends to close the "Bank of KDOT" by 2023, and announced the launch of her Framework for Growth for small businesses.

In a pre-recorded message from the new Senate President Ty Masterson, his response opened with a call to set aside partisan politics and to work with the governor on moving Kansas forward. He did give a glimpse of what his priorities

Significant Dates and Events

Monday, February 1st

Last day for member or members to REQUEST bill drafts from Revisor's office.

Monday, February 8th

Last day for non-exempt Committees to REQUEST bill drafts from the Revisor's office.

NOTE: This is the last day requests for introduction can be on nonexempt committee agendas.

Wednesday, February 10th

Last day for Individuals to INTRODUCE bills in originating chamber. NOTE: Bills must be submitted to chamber staff during daily session for Introduction.



are this year, which include not raising taxes, keeping businesses open, local control of schools, and the Value Them Both abortion constitutional amendment.

Budget Report

The governor has submitted her budget to the legislature and she said her focus is to keep a positive ending balance and to continue to work through the issues the pandemic has brought on.

As mentioned earlier, the governor has also continued to stress her administration is not going to use the “Bank of KDOT” as a funding source for other agencies. Republicans in the legislature say she is instead using the “Bank of KPERS” by proposing to reamortizing the unfunded liability that has been in the process of being paid off. The governor wants to use the money reamortizing brings in for mental health programs and other issues.

Legislators will begin their look at the budget very soon. In addition to the normal budget proceedings, state Covid relief funding will also come under legislative scrutiny this session.

The governor’s budget fully funds the K-12 base requirements and restores some of the proposed cuts to higher education made over the summer.

The budget also funds economic development programs like the Main Street Program, and international trade programs.

There’s funding for upgrades to the antiquated computer system at the Department of Labor, which should help get unemployment benefits out more efficiently.

This is the beginning of the beginning for the budget process. Legislators hope to get the basic budget items done in quick fashion due to the uncertainty of the legislative session’s schedule.

COVID Emergency Extension

During the 2020 Special Session, the Legislature passed House Bill 2016, which extended the Governor’s state of emergency declaration until January 26, 2021. The bill also included several liability protections for healthcare workers and businesses in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. With the expiration of that law looming, the Senate Judiciary Committee held two days of hearings this week on [Senate Bill 14](#) that extends the law through March 31 of this year. The



intention is to buy the Legislature time to consider more long-term changes to the Kansas Emergency Management Act.

With no opposition testimony presented during the hearing, Senate Bill 14 passed the Senate Judiciary Committee on Wednesday, and the Senate spent nearly four hours debating the bill on the floor on Thursday. The bill ultimately passed on Emergency Final Action by a vote of 34-1.

A similar bill passed the House Judiciary Committee on Thursday, [House Bill 2048](#). The main differences between the House and Senate versions deal with the effective dates. It's clear that this legislation is being fast-tracked to move through both chambers and get to conference committee most likely by the end of next week.

Property Tax Transparency

One of the several bills that was vetoed by Governor Laura Kelly last session included a proposal that repeals the current property tax lid and requires "Truth in Taxation" notice and public hearings prior to a local governing body exceeding their property tax revenue from the previous year. As one of the Senate Tax Committee Chairwoman's major priorities, [Senate Bill 13](#) was reintroduced, passed out of the Senate Tax Committee, then passed by the full Senate by a vote of 34-1 this week. This is another bill on Senate leadership's priority list that is expected to move quickly.

Agency Reports, Informational Hearings

Typically, at the start of every session, legislators spend the first week or two holding informational hearings on a variety of topics. This week, lawmakers received reports from the Kansas Lottery, Secretary of State regarding elections, from the interim Special Committee on Economic Recovery, and the State Banking Commissioner.

Statehouse Security

Governor Laura Kelly issued a memo on Thursday that outlined several new statehouse security precautions to be put in place next week due to the national unrest surrounding President Trump's impeachment and President-Elect Joe Biden's swearing in on Wednesday.

The parking garage will be closed, and the building will only be open to lawmakers, staff, and those with proof they have official business with the



Legislature or Executive Branch. Many conferees that were planning on attending hearings in person are being encouraged to testify remotely instead.

Bill Number	Bill Sponsor	Bill Subject	Current Status	Last Action	Notes
HB 2058	House Federal and State Affairs Committee	Allowing reciprocity to recognize out-of-state licenses to carry a concealed handgun	In House Federal and State Affairs	01/14/2021 - House Referred to Federal and State Affairs	