



HOUSING HIGHLIGHTS



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EMP Shield Plans To Build A Semiconductor Plant on 300 acres of land located in (the city of) Burlington's Silicon Prairie Industrial Park. When completed the project will create 1,200 jobs that will pay \$66K a year. The manufacturer will be using state financial support in the form of tax incentives, in conjunction with Federal funding available specifically for microchip production. This announcement makes them the 2nd company to do so here in Kansas in less than 2 months

The House Education Committee is considering a bill that would increase the Kansas public school year by 444 hours. Proponents claim it would be beneficial to K-12 students by giving them more time to learn more things. Critics are concerned about the cost of additional maintenance and transportation costs, plus the expense of paying all the teachers and staff for their expanded work calendar.

The House Elections Committee is expected to vote on legislation to restrict the subpoena power of the Kansas Governmental Ethics Commission. Opponents say the bill will render the agency essentially useless because it strips them of any possible way to adequately investigate complaints against candidates and political action committees for violations of the Campaign Finance Act. Supporters claim the proposed constraints are necessary to curb overly aggressive enforcement tactics that inhibit free speech.

The House Health & Human Services Committee has advanced a bill to the full floor that would create a state drug overdose prevention board that also includes a plan to legalize fentanyl test strips. The inexpensive and easy-to-use test strips can detect whether food, drink, or other drugs are laced with the often-deadly opioid. Efforts to legalize the test strips in the past have been stifled by legislators with concern it would encourage drug use. Now many of those critical of passage agree with supporters of the legislation who say that it will help curb the alarmingly high spike in fentanyl-related deaths over the past year here in Kansas.

Housing legislation moves forward as the Senate passes by a vote of 30-6 SB 34, which amends the Kansas Rural Housing Incentive District (RHID) Act to allow certain housing projects in cities with a population of 60,000 or more and expands the list of costs that may be paid for by proceeds of special obligations bonds, adding renovation or construction of residential dwellings, multifamily units or buildings or other structures exclusively for residential use located on existing lots under certain conditions. Additionally, SB 37, which amends the recently enacted Kansas Housing Investor Tax Credit Act to allow multiple transfers of tax credits, advanced by a vote of 35-4. Both measures will move to the House for further consideration.

The House Water Committee has endorsed, and moved to the full floor, two pieces of legislation that

would mandate water conservation for crop irrigation in Western Kansas counties served by the Ogallala Aquifer, if their available underground water has dropped below a 50-year supply. HB 2279 calls for groundwater district officials to identify their problem areas, and submit a plan to mitigate those problems, by July 2026. The other measure, HB 2302, modifies the source of money for the state water plan fund by using state sales tax revenue to create the water technical assistance fund and the water projects grant fund to assist municipalities with water-related infrastructure projects. Both measures were approved by the House and advanced to the Senate.

The Kansas Airport Improvement Program will be receiving \$11 million in Federal funds to construct or rehabilitate 66 general aviation airports across the state for public use. The 3 airports receiving the largest grants are Lawrence Regional - \$1,390,250; New Century Air Center - \$1,374,300; and Johnson County Executive - \$299,350.

The Kansas Education Enrichment Program is accepting applications for K-12 students whose parents' or legal guardian's household income is less than 185% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines. The new program offers \$1K per student, ages 5-18, to provide them with extracurricular learning opportunities, and educational activities such as in-person or online tutoring, academic-related camps, or lessons to encourage artistic talents, along with the materials, instruments, and/or devices necessary to develop those abilities. These grants are offered through a contract between Merit International, Inc. and the Kansas Office of Recovery, and are fully funded with American Rescue Plan Act monies approved through the SPARK process.

The Kansas Office of Broadband Development began a statewide listening tour to hear directly from Kansans about their internet access concerns to be able to better address specific challenges different areas face. Special attention will be paid to groups and communities that are unduly impacted by digital inadequacies including, but not limited to, low-income households, aging populations, people with disabilities or language barriers, racial and ethnic minorities, rural inhabitants, incarcerated individuals, and veterans. Responses from the onsite and virtual focus groups will be foundational in creating a planning document to connect all Kansans to the internet by 2030 that will be submitted to the National Telecommunications and Information Administration as a requirement for receiving grant funding from the Broadband, Equity, Access, and Deployment and Digital Equity Act programs.

The Senate Utilities Committee has passed a bill regarding wind turbines. SB 49 would mandate all Kansas wind farm owners apply for Federal Aviation Administration permission to replace their existing 24/7 blinking red light aviation warning systems with newly developed fixtures that turn on only when their integrated radar detects approaching airplanes, and turn off when the sky is clear of aircraft. And would require all new wind turbines to have this improved light technology in place. The full Senate considered the bill and passed over to the House.

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