



# HOUSING HIGHLIGHTS



*2026 Legislature Week Four  
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**Federal appropriations for Fiscal Year 2026 have authorized more than \$7 million in assistance to improve rural healthcare infrastructure throughout Kansas.** The aim is to improve medical capabilities and patient outcomes, so that access to essential care remains a viable incentive to stay in a rural environment. Although an additional \$6 million has gone to national programs to expand rural hospital quality and service maintenance state-wide, this funding will focus on just five facilities.

**If passed SB 387 would provide state revenue to pay for free breakfast and lunch for qualifying at-risk students at an approximate annual price of \$2.5 million.** The bill will require schools to annually confirm with written evidence the household income for each program eligible student or risk losing all their at-risk state funding. Advocates say this measure provides for fiscal accountability and is consistent with recent findings from a state audit of eligibility that found errors, although the auditors said the review was restricted to income based applications from students, not most students who are directly certified. On the other hand, executive branch officials and legal advocates say that the verification requirements could lead to unfunded administrative burdens, break USDA regulations and threaten \$250 million in federal nutrition funds. Further, the legislation provides new powers for the Legislature to govern school participation in the federal Community Eligibility Provision, which funds high poverty districts. The bill has made its way out of committee and is now pending a Senate vote on a floor debate.

**Property tax relief efforts slow amid policy divide.** Property tax relief remains a dominant issue in the 2026 legislative session, but despite early momentum, lawmakers have made little tangible progress. The House and Senate remain divided over how best to curb rising property tax burdens for homeowners and businesses. At the center of the debate is a fundamental disagreement over the approach to take. The Senate continues to advocate for a constitutional amendment aimed at limiting the growth of property appraisals. Supporters argue that restricting appraisal increases on residences provides uniform, long-term relief and protects taxpayers from sudden spikes in assessed property values driven by market volatility. The House's view is different, and they emphasize reforms at the local level. House leaders maintain that appraisal values and tax bills are not the same, and any meaningful relief is better achieved by addressing tax rates, exemptions, and local budget decisions rather than capping valuations statewide. While both proposals are framed as solutions to the same problem, the distinction between valuation and taxation is significant. Appraisal caps on residential property may slow the growth of assessed values but do not guarantee lower tax bills, particularly if it shifts the responsibility to cover lost revenue to other property classifications. Compounding the challenge is public expectation. Proposals that promise immediate or dramatic reductions risk fueling additional taxpayer frustration if relief is slower or more limited than anticipated. The criticism from members of both parties and both chambers around the lack of an early breakthrough during the first month of the session was expected as pressure mounts from constituents facing higher tax bills. Lawmakers are hoping to bridge the policy divide and demonstrate meaningful property tax relief before the session concludes in early April.

**The Senate Transportation Committee recently passed SB 113, which dramatically increases penalties for extremely fast auto speeds.** It would criminalize speeding at 100 miles per hour or more, as well as driving 35 miles per hour over a posted speed. Under the current law, these violations are dealt with via traffic citation fines but this bill would make it possible for judges to send offenders to jail. Public support for the bill is based on increased unsafe driving behavior in parts of the state. Legislative attention needs to be paid to statistical details from the Highway Patrol that shows officers issued more than 2,630 citations for speeds exceeding the triple digits in 2024, a 50% increase since 2019.

**Kansas finished January 2026 with strong fiscal results totaling tax collections of \$988.2 million.** This is nearly \$12.2 million and about 5% higher than the same time last year. The numbers suggest a strong economic momentum with revenue increasing substantially based on income-based tax revenue sources. The category exceeded forecasts by 1.4% and surged by 8.4% compared to the previous year's numbers. Corporate income taxes were an even bigger boost, raising \$86.2 million. That led to a significant 23.2% surplus compared to estimates, and to an improvement of 18.1% year-over-year, showing strong business activity in the state. The consumption side of the economy, by contrast, was cooling. Retail sales and compensating use tax receipts totaled \$337.8 million. Those collections were 3.5% behind estimates and down 3.2% from January 2025.

**Proposed Legislation HB 2462, would create a system to recycle and reuse treated wastewater that could eventually be turned back into household drinking water.** This is an urgent response to the continued depletion of the Ogallala Aquifer while attempting to strengthen water security throughout the state. The proposal has received widespread enthusiasm from water resource experts, but the discourse has turned to logistics in implementation. The Kansas Department of Health and Environment has reported that developing these new safety standards will require skilled personnel, such as engineers, and project managers to carry out the research and develop regulations. Some lawmakers feel that Kansas might shorten this time frame by drawing from research that has been done in other states, but health officials say that any assessment should take place formally to ensure that these models fit within Kansans' specific needs. Among the bill's primary aims is the integrity of the purification process. The transition to recycled water means that it requires specialized, multi-stage treatment of the final product at each stage so that it satisfies all safety criteria. In addition to engineering, there is the collective effort to promote public acceptance.

**Recently proposed SB 394, would mandate a statutory link between advanced mail-in voting and verification of signatures.** Supporters of the bill, including the Secretary of State's Office, argued before the Senate Federal and State Affairs Committee that signature verification is not a separate process from mail-in voting, and that the application, ballot and verification processes are so closely related that they cannot be separate and is a necessary element of election security, The Kansas Supreme Court recognized the legal validity of verification laws in 2024, though it compelled lower courts to determine whether the policy meets constitutional provisions governing equal protection and due process. Critics, including ACLU of Kansas representatives, argued that the law could lead to the complete elimination of mail-in ballots even though matching signatures can discriminate against certain marginalized groups, including people with disabilities, voters overseas, and those who have changed their names due to marriage or divorce. They pointed out that of 300,000 mail ballots returned in recent cycles only a scant fraction were rejected due to signature discrepancies of which the majority were voter remedied.

**The Department of Children and Families has initiated a major homeless prevention campaign through the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program.** The funding is allocated \$5 million per annum over two years starting July 1st, 2026, and ending June 30th, 2028. The agreement is

supported by the provision for two optional one-year renewals for continued impact. DCF has awarded the grant to the Kansas Housing Resources Corporation, which will work through a partnership with Kansas Statewide Homeless Coalition, City of Topeka, United Way of the Plains and Metro Lutheran Ministry. The partnership will seek to utilize a systemic approach, beyond providing temporary shelter by providing support for vulnerable families and ensuring access to safe and stable housing as a stepping-stone to economic opportunity and personal health. It will focus on rapidly rehousing families who are currently homeless and keeping homes for persons who are on the threshold of being forced.

**The Department of Commerce announced the WorkS Public Broadcasting Grant application window is open and will close at 5pm on Friday, March 20th.** The initiative increases opportunities for rural people to share stories on development and modernization in their area, The Office of Rural Prosperity also provides \$500,000 for licensed public broadcasting radio and television stations to grant to create innovative, educational content that celebrates workforce development by making use of new technologies and telecommuting and the impact this will bring about on people's lives and commerce in rural parts of the state. Submissions for funding eligible initiatives that focus on three dominant topics: new technologies related to rural economic development; the readiness to work remotely; youth's future in rural workforces. Winners will need to produce at least one television, radio or digital broadcast-quality program or series and the projects need to create online content with accompanying technology capable of being distributed through the internet via podcasts, web series or social media shorts to ensure audiences from across the demographics can have exposure to the content. This initiative is to connect media resources to economic goals, focusing statewide attention on small communities. In April the Office of Rural Prosperity is expected to announce its award recipients. For additional information about the program, click here: <https://www.kansascommerce.gov/orp/>

**The Department of Commerce has allocated over \$4.1 million in Community Development Block Grants to 12 infrastructure and development projects.** These strategic investments are targeted at enhancing housing, public facilities, and economic opportunities for rural and low-to-moderate income areas. This is to arm local leaders with the resources and financial assistance necessary to solve unique regional problems. The CDBG program is a crucial aid to bridge development gaps with sustainable growth. It guarantees that every region can grow in today's competitive economic environment. The \$4,125,316 in federal funds will be augmented by \$9,158,623 in local contributions for a total of \$12,283,939 for the public improvements. Thanks to this collaborative funding model, projects are sustainable and rooted in the distinctive needs of each municipality. These paid-for projects are an example of long-term development that results in transformed living conditions for residents as a result.

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