



HOUSING HIGHLIGHTS



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Session Hits Midpoint as Turnaround Day Passes

Turnaround Day has officially passed at the Kansas Legislature, marking a key milestone in the legislative calendar. This deadline requires most bills to pass out of their chamber of origin in order to remain active for the session. As a result, Turnaround Day matters because it significantly narrows the field of legislation under consideration. While hundreds of proposals are introduced each year, only those that meet this deadline continue moving forward. Surviving bills now cross over to the opposite chamber - from the Kansas House of Representatives to the Kansas Senate, or vice versa - for further committee hearings, debate, amendments, and votes. So far in the 2025–2026 regular session, lawmakers have introduced 1,411 bills and resolutions across both chambers. With Turnaround behind us, the Legislature now shifts its focus to refining and advancing the measures that remain in play. The days leading up to Turnaround are often fast paced, with extended floor debates and last minute negotiations as lawmakers work to advance priority measures. As we move into the second half of session, attention now shifts to reviewing and refining the bills that cleared this important hurdle.

The Property Tax Relief

HB 2745 was passed by the House Taxation Committee to restrict the growth of local property tax revenue. The bill has eliminated a controversial amendment that would have required elections for any proposed tax increases. The committee also elected not to sustain the current "revenue neutral" legislation but implemented a cap and petition mechanism instead. To support city governments, the state aims to budget \$60 million a year, a 2% increase a year. The bill also permits exemptions of Economic Development Incentives and Municipal Debt to protect current financial responsibilities. Proponents of the bill say it is responsible fiscal management. Opponents say that the threshold is too small for local budgeting mechanisms. The full House is expected to debate the bill on Tuesday.

Civil Damages Instruction Ban

SB 413 has been sent to the House for consideration. If the bill passes, Kansas would be the first state to stop lawyers from proposing dollar amounts, ranges or mathematical equations to juries for noneconomic damages in civil cases. The bill is supported by well-known businesses and healthcare organizations. Proponents say if this is done, civil litigation would be more just for everyone. Critics argue the legislation limits freedom of speech and limits legal support for vulnerable people - such as survivors of abuse - ultimately denying them the justice they deserve due to ill-advised juries.

Cellphone Ban in Schools

SB 281 House Substitute passed with a 76-45 vote in the House of Representatives banning personal electronic devices in all educational settings. Students would be required to keep their cellphones, smartwatches, and earbuds turned off and stored away throughout the school day, including during passing periods and lunch. An amendment added private school settings to the ban even though state mandates for private schools violate parental choice and school autonomy, particularly without corresponding state funding. The measure has returned to the Senate for approval - or not - of the House's changes.

First-Time Homebuyers Empowerment Act

Federal lawmakers - including Representative Tracey Mann - have proposed the "First-Time Homebuyer Empowerment Act" to combat the crisis of housing affordability. The legislation was designed to remove the high cost barrier associated with hefty down payment obligations by allowing individuals to tap their 529 Education Savings Plan funds tax-free to purchase or build their first home. Major industry groups, such as the National Association of Realtors, the National Association of Home Builders, and the Mortgage Bankers Association, expressed their concern that this proposal is being steamrolled through and essentially over them. Supporters believe the measure will allow buyers to save without passing any financial burden to the taxpayers.

Bridging the Housing Gap

National lawmakers move in a bipartisan effort to assist the nation's housing market. The plan is to address the deficit of unavailable homes for millions of families that are growing faster than building is starting. To resolve this, new standards for manufactured housing and pre approved design templates to expedite the approval process of local housing developments and federal neighborhood grants will be channeled directly into new construction. The plan also simplifies the inspection process for property owners, and will stimulate a broader participation in rental assistance programs. Central to the strategy is incentivizing community bank capacity so that they can finance local affordable developments. Advocates in the industry have expressed firm support, characterizing these measures as pragmatic responses to a complex supply problem.

Free-Market Shift in Housing Approvals

SB 418 to be known as the Home Ownership Made Easier Act (HOME) was recently approved by the Kansas Senate. A major part of this measure is to bridge the gap between the state's lack of affordable housing and the climbing cost of homes. The proposed state-level framework is a commitment to facilitate "by-right development" which will streamline the approval process for satisfying all county, city, and local rules before developments become actual projects. Proponents say free-market reform will facilitate affordability, encourage economic independence and provide access to homes for future generations of Kansans. Going forward, stakeholders are pressuring the House and the Governor to enact this policy as quickly as possible while calling for much broader reform to eliminate exclusionary zoning and antiquated regulatory hurdles statewide.

Attorney Training Program

HB 2595 would establish the Attorney Training Program for Rural Kansas Act. Lawmakers advanced legislation Wednesday to help address the shortage of attorneys in small-town communities. Several rural counties have no practicing attorneys, while 80% of the state's lawyers are concentrated in just six counties, leaving many areas in "legal deserts." Authored by State Representative Ken Rahjes, HB 2595 would offer incentives and support for licensed attorneys or law students at Washburn University and the University of Kansas to practice in rural parts of the state. The bill passed the House by a vote of 118 to 4 and now moves to the Senate for consideration.

New Oversight for Pharmacy Managers

SB 360 would expand regulations for Pharmacy Benefit Managers and was approved by the Kansas Senate by a 32-8 margin. Currently PBMs are being charged with anti-competitive trade practices which threaten independent pharmacies and gouge prices for consumers. The bill would give broad regulatory powers to the state insurance commissioner. Key provisions include transparency in prices and reimbursement rates for drugs. Support for the measure has been strong from independent pharmacies, hospitals and consumer advocates who feel that PBMs siphon money from the system without delivering patient value. In contrast, groups representing PBMs, business chambers and those from health insurers oppose the legislation on the grounds that this could increase health insurance costs unnecessarily and transfer financial burden onto consumers. Approved in the Senate, the law is sent to the Kansas House to be considered.

State Wildfire Relief Efforts

Southwest Kansas wildfires have burned nearly 283,000 acres with hundreds of cattle losses. This emergency has a coordinated response of state agencies and local organizations to recover people in communities and fields impacted by this crisis. Several organizations and businesses are helping reach rural, farm-based ranchers with vital supplies, including hay, feed, livestock water, and fencing materials. Stakeholders are urged to direct constituents to these important resources:

- Kansas Livestock Association (Supply Donations & Needs): 785-273-5115
- Pratt Livestock (Livestock Feed & Water): 620-546-1799
- Shaw Feed Yard (Hay Drop-off - Contact Ryan Kunst): 620-805-4682
- Ashland Feed & Seed (Feed & Hay Drop-off): Phone: 620-635-2856

The Kansas Department of Insurance is working with the Division of Emergency Management to help residents file claims and process the recovery. For more info: insurance.kansas.gov or call 785-296-3071

The Department of Agriculture is offering critical recovery resources, and mental health support is being facilitated through specialized agricultural networks. For more info: agriculture.ks.gov or call 785-564-6700 KansasAgStress.org for mental health resources:

Ashland Community Foundation is collecting and sharing donations to those affected. To donate: ashlandcf.com/donate

VFW Post 1714 in Dodge City is collecting donations of bottled water and Gatorade in small bottles, facial wipes, eye drops, lip balm, snack items like crackers, beef sticks, energy bars. The Clark County Fairgrounds is accepting donated fencing materials.

New Kansas Investment Awards

The Department of Commerce has launched two new grant opportunities under the Kansas Community Empowerment program funded by the Patterson Family Foundation, Kansas Health Foundation, Sunflower Foundation, and Blue Cross Blue Shield of Kansas. The program will provide grant funds to enable volunteers and community advocates to transform local visions into actionable results. The grants will be dispersed in two separate tracks:

Award #1 \$500 - \$5,000 intended for early stage engagement projects and

Award #2 \$5,000 - \$15,000 intended for investment projects.

<https://www.kansascommerce.gov/kce/>

The Patient Aid Mandate

House Bill 2736 failed decisively in the House with only 20 in favor and 102 against. The measure would have required all hospital patients to undergo mandatory screenings for financial aid. Supporters hope that this will help to spot eligible patients early, preventing downstream financial costs from materializing. The Kansas Hospital Association expressed concerns about privacy risks and administrative burdens.

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