



# HOUSING HIGHLIGHTS

2026 Legislature Week Seven  
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**After the recent devastating wildfires, Governor Kelly made a state of disaster declaration and an executive order** that seeks to promote wildfire response and recovery operations statewide. To get essential supplies into the hands of affected farmers and ranchers, Executive Order 2026-01 offers regulatory relief to commercial motor vehicle carriers and drivers. Normal hours of service requirements have been temporarily waived for up to 14 days for those making direct emergency assistance under this directive. The order also waives certain vehicle dimension restrictions and permit fees as applied to carriers involved in recovery efforts to allow resources to quickly move to those communities that may otherwise lack them. Additionally, US Senators Moran, Marshall and US Representative Mann have sent a letter to Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins requesting immediate USDA financial assistance and services to ranchers and farmers in Clark, Comanche, Finney, Rawlins, Seward and Stevens counties where the wildfires destroyed 300K acres, miles of fencing, hay supplies, and resulted in hundreds of livestock losses.

**The House recently passed - with an 87-22 vote - a revised property tax reform bill to curb increases in local property taxes.** Under the legislation, cities and counties must reduce mill levies when property values increase significantly, placing a cap on annual property tax increases at 3%. Public school districts, new construction and economic development are exempt from this cap. Before approval however, the lawmakers stripped away a \$60 million state fund intended to financially fund local governments that kept tax increases under the 3% upper limit and they lowered the threshold for public protest petitions from 10% to a minimum of 5%, giving the public more power to stop local governments from going over the tax cap.

**Kansas House Advances and Passes State Budget.** This week the Kansas House of Representatives continued its work on the state budget, culminating in passage of the main appropriations bill for fiscal years 2026–2028. On Thursday, Feb. 26, the chamber approved the budget on a 68–53 vote, moving the package forward for consideration by the Senate. Debate on the House floor included disagreements over spending priorities, particularly efforts by Democrats to increase funding for K-12 special education that were rejected by the GOP majority. The adopted budget also contains controversial provisions affecting higher education and other policy areas embedded in the larger spending bill. The Senate is expected to debate its version of the state budget on the Senate floor next week. Once the Senate completes action on its budget proposal, House and Senate appropriators will convene conference committee meetings to review and reconcile differences between the two chambers' spending plans. Those negotiations will determine the final agreed-upon state budget, which must be adopted by both chambers before being sent to the Governor for consideration.

**Jeff Kuzbel, president and CEO of FHLBank recently gathered with other local leaders at a public forum in Topeka to announce a \$34 million investment** in regional affordable infrastructure and community development grants. These specific contributions will support both construction and rehabilitation of over 1,700 homes for very low to moderate income families. Funds will be provided for 31 affordable housing programs across KS, CO, NE and OK with 10% of the program's annual income spent on these projects. One project funded will be a \$1.37 million grant to build 3D printed homes.

**HB 2687 and HB 2679 are being considered to legalize medical and adult recreational marijuana.** If approved, the legislation would shift tax revenues from the sale of cannabis to the state's general fund, childcare, affordable housing, and property tax relief. Both draft proposals are currently facing the Committee on Federal and State Affairs. Nationally, an executive order in December was issued to help speed up the reclassification of marijuana as a less harmful drug. This federal action is intended to advance medical research and as a result state-level legalizations have been increasing with 40 states already passing legislation for the drug to be sold for medicinal use with most of those also offering recreational options too.

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**Recent data from the USDA's Farms and Land report revealed Kansas lost approximately 700 farm and ranch operations.** The average farm size in Kansas rose by an additional seven acres, matching the national average increase to 469 acres per farm, even after the total farm number fell. The report finds lower numbers of small to mid size operations — whereas larger farms are on the rise, with sales exceeding \$250,000. Agricultural economists attribute this change chiefly to the consolidation of farms, as profit margins become tighter and bigger operations scoop up nearby land and take smaller ones in. That pattern mirrors longstanding historical data, which illustrates that Kansas has lost nearly 10,700 farms over the last two decades, even as average size growth rose 382 acres per farm. This decline in the number of farms, industry specialists say, is nationwide and more than compensated for by overall improvement in the level of agricultural output and industry efficiencies.

**A newly proposed bill would require drivers to use turn signals when exiting or changing lanes inside roundabouts.** The law aims to make driving safer by forcing a signal in the complex, two lane roundabouts where things often change suddenly. Committee members are broadly in agreement on these driving rules, but there is concern over the lack of provision for a public education campaign or a grace period for warning citations in the first year of a law.

**Legislation requiring naloxone (an overdose reversing medication) to be stocked in all public educational institutions, has moved to the Kansas Senate.** While this is a move to standardize school critical safety practices statewide, community centered overdose prevention programs are pushing for a more comprehensive plan that underscores the need for accompanying behavioral health support and recovery pathways. Advocacy organizations also emphasize the need for law enforcement agencies to work in partnerships with the organizations that already have experience working with adolescent overdose prevention.

**State leaders are urging the Sedgwick County Commission to implement a three year moratorium on data center projects**, in response to the public's growing lack of trust in the out of state tech company's significant lack of transparency. A 90 day suspension on data center permits was imposed in January, to assess the actual impact these infrastructures will have on the electrical grid and what investments will be needed to improve the roads, drainage systems, and emergency services for such huge facilities. If the county does not adopt local safeguards, state level measures are planned to require protections. The agriculture sector strongly supports the halt in order to make sure further development stays within the guidelines for responsible growth to protect natural resources, farmland, and private property rights.

**Lesser Prairie Chicken Delisted from Federal Protection.** The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has formally removed the lesser prairie chicken from federal Endangered Species Act protections following a federal court ruling in Texas. The bird had most recently been listed in 2022, with the northern population designated as threatened and a southern population segment listed as endangered. Kansas, Oklahoma, and Texas, along with representatives of the beef and petroleum industries, challenged the listing, arguing the federal government lacked sufficient justification to divide the species into two distinct population segments. A federal judge agreed last summer, and the agency subsequently reversed its prior decision. With the delisting now finalized, federal restrictions tied to habitat protections — including requirements affecting energy development and ranching activities — are no longer in place. Industry and state officials have praised the decision, while environmental groups have indicated they intend to continue pursuing legal challenges.

## **KANSAS HOUSING ASSOCIATION, INC.**

513 SW VAN BUREN STREET, TOPEKA, KANSAS 66603

PHONE: 785-235-6283 FAX: 785-235-8676

[KHA@KANSASHOUSINGASSOCIATION.COM](mailto:KHA@KANSASHOUSINGASSOCIATION.COM)

[WWW.KANSASHOUSINGASSOCIATION.COM](http://WWW.KANSASHOUSINGASSOCIATION.COM)

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