



# HOUSING HIGHLIGHTS

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## **Agricultural Impacts Of USDA Staff Reductions**

According to data from the U.S. Office of Personnel Management, the USDA eliminated more than 24K workers between September 2024 and December 2025. In Kansas, those losses have been felt severely with more than 500 positions lost here. In addition, the state lost about a quarter of Farm Service Agency personnel. Local producers are waiting far longer to access essential services such as disaster relief, crop insurance, and low interest loans. These administrative hurdles are occurring during a period of extreme economic pressure on agriculture through tight margins, extreme weather, and pressure of international trade. Without significant collateral, private financial institutions are becoming increasingly hesitant to lend, thus producers are still largely reliant on timely federal support.

## **Angel Investor Tax Credit Extension**

The Senate Commerce Committee is now considering extending the Angel Investor Tax Credit Program - set to expire this year - through 2031. This Department of Commerce initiative offers high-risk startups up to a 50% transferable tax credit for early-stage financial investments, with current annual credits capped at \$8 million. Representative Borjon is a strong advocate for the extension saying the proposal provides critical capital needed for entrepreneurs in all 105 of Kansas counties to overcome key initial funding barriers. The measure recently passed the House with a 93-28 majority.

## **Budget Bill Highlights**

The Kansas House of Representatives has adopted HB 2434 - the state budget for the 2026 legislative session - with a 68-53 vote. The balanced budget decreases total State General Fund expenses for Fiscal Year 2027 from the previous year and invests strategically in five fundamental areas. Agricultural highlights include funds for the Musil Center for Sustainable Wheat Production, Equus Beds Aquifer research, water conservation districts, and a new Kansas State University dairy barn. Education allocations include \$10 million for Special Education State Aid, support for the Blueprint for Literacy Program, and \$15 million split equally among major state universities to fund Alzheimer's, aviation, and nuclear accelerator research. In the name of economic growth, the budget also allocates over \$15 million to moderate-income housing grants, the TOWNS program, and the State Housing Trust Fund. Public safety offerings account for rising healthcare contracts, state facility mapping, and a new hearing protection initiative. Social services receive significant infrastructure and operational support, in particular \$28.9 million to construct the new South Central Regional Mental Health Hospital in Wichita, as well as rate increases to Home and Community Based Services waivers, increased Medicaid capacity and dental rates, and community mental health center grants.

## **Low Income Housing Coming To Little Apple**

Community leaders gathered to celebrate the groundbreaking for Sunflower Flats - an affordable housing project in downtown Manhattan. This construction will add more than 60 one bedroom units in the city, with all specifically designated for Section 8 availability. This new planned complex demonstrates strong cooperation between the local housing authority, developers, private lenders, and construction crews. The facility is estimated to be completed within 18 months, with resident move-ins shortly thereafter.

### **KAC Grants Are Now Open**

The Kansas Arts Commission has made applications available for 3 grant programs designed to foster economic vitality, community pride, and cultural heritage. The available funding streams include the *General Operating Support Grant* for the daily operations of established arts organizations, the *Arts Everywhere Grant* for specific initiatives by both arts and non arts groups, and the *Public Art & Murals Grant* for permanent and semi permanent installations. Funded through state legislative appropriations, the National Endowment for the Arts, and Kansas license plate fees, these expand the commission's recent distribution of more than \$1.25 million to organizations in 38 counties. Eligible applicants must secure a one to one funding match. The grant period shall be July 1, 2026, through June 30, 2027. Applications must be submitted by March 23rd, through the online portal at: [kansascommerce.gov](https://www.kansascommerce.gov)

### **Parks And Wildlife Policy Considered**

Newly proposed legislation would require the Department of Wildlife and Parks Secretary to seek state lawmakers approval prior to any agency reorganization. This seeks to address ongoing questions and grievances about the department's transparency and administrative trust dating to April 2025. If passed, SB 511 will thwart future unilateral changes without legislative oversight. The bill is currently pending action in committee.

### **Search For New Education Commissioner**

The Kansas Education Board is moving forward with a search for a new Commissioner to succeed Randy Watson, who announced his impending retirement last fall. The screening process began on March 3rd, during a special executive session for the board. Currently, the board is seeking a pool of up to six candidates for initial interviewing. In order to guarantee the anonymity of the candidates at this early stage, applicant identities will remain private until the board formally declares three finalists later this month.

### **Supreme Court Chief Justice Retiring**

Kansas Supreme Court Justice Marla Luckert has announced her retirement, effective March 28, 2026, concluding 34 years of judicial service and 23 years on the state's highest court. Having stepped down from her role as Chief Justice in January, Luckert remained on the bench to finalize her active caseload. Justice Eric Rosen officially assumed the Chief Justice duties in January. The Goodland native reflected on her career with profound gratitude to Kansas voters for their continued support and to the former governors who appointed her to the judiciary. Luckert also expressed her hope that her path from rural Kansas to the Supreme Court will inspire young women across the state to pursue ambitious leadership goals.

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