

LEGISLATIVE PROTOCOL



TOP LEFT: PLEXIGLAS SHIELDS ARE MOUNTED ON DESKS IN THE HOUSE CHAMBER

TOP RIGHT: EACH SEAT IN THE HOUSE CHAMBER IS MARKED WITH A SHEET OF PAPER SHOWING WHERE LAWMAKERS WOULD SIT DURING THE SESSION

The 2021 Legislature will be decidedly different when lawmakers return to Topeka during the COVID-19 pandemic.

IN THE KANSAS HOUSE

Kansas legislative leaders are making adjustments, especially in the House where committee room chairs are being removed to foster social distancing and many lawmakers will be seated in the gallery to keep the virus from spreading. Some additional changes include:

- Seating arrangements are being reconfigured in the 10 committee rooms used by the House so lawmakers can keep a safe distance from each other as they deliberate.
- Chairs and benches are being removed to allow for social distancing, which could leave lobbyists, activists, agency staffers and the media to watch or listen to meetings remotely.
- Three House committee rooms will have adjacent overflow rooms where a limited number of interested parties can watch committee proceedings unfold.
- Plexiglas shields have been added to the benches where the House clerks sit in the chamber so they can work safely as lawmakers debate legislation.
- New computer software will allow House members to vote remotely from their laptops, since many will be seated in the gallery.
- Lawmakers are able to vote remotely as long as they are in the House or Senate chambers. The Kansas attorney general found that the state constitution required legislators to physically be in the same room to pass bills.



COMMITTEE ROOMS HAVE BEEN RECONFIGURED TO INCLUDE TABLES WHERE LAWMAKERS WILL BE SOCIALLY DISTANCED

Officials from the University of Kansas Health System recently toured the Capitol and made a series of recommendations for keeping the Capitol safe.

The report recommended increasing the spacing of furniture and removing chairs or other furniture that promotes sitting and congregating, keeping a 6-foot distance during all interactions and keeping doors open to promote circulation when meetings last longer than 30 minutes. The report also recommended mask use throughout the statehouse unless within a closed-door office alone, something that is not being required.

IN THE KANSAS SENATE

The Kansas Senate will also make changes including:

- Use flexible seating arrangements to promote social distancing as much as possible, both in the Senate chamber as well as in committee rooms;
- Work with the calendar to minimize days and time on the Senate floor;
- Minimize the number of people on the Senate floor by limiting access to those who are essential to the conduct of legislative business; and,
- Allow stakeholders and members of the public to testify remotely before Senate committees.

EXPECTED CHANGES

- All committee rooms are now wired for audio and video feeds, made possible by \$3 million in federal coronavirus relief funds.
- Testimony will be posted online and anyone testifying will have the option of addressing a committee remotely in either the House or the Senate.
- Reporters will not be given floor passes in the House in an effort to limit access to the floor and give lawmakers more room to spread out.
- Statehouse access could be limited to only those who have legislative business at the statehouse.
- The House and the Senate will also provide masks to lawmakers on request and plans to make COVID-19 testing available to legislators and staff.

The 2021 Legislative Session is sure to be different and the legislature will adapt as they move forward with a new way of conducting business during the COVID-19 pandemic.