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## Kansas Legislative Report, January 22-26, 2024

*The pace picked up significantly this week in the Kansas Legislature. Lawmakers near the first legislative deadline next Monday, when all member-sponsored bill drafts must be requested by the revisors office. We saw 93 new bills introduced this week and 60 hearings scheduled for next week.*

### **Tax Bill Sent to Governor**

During a press conference on Tuesday, House and Senate leadership officially signed and sent [House Bill 2284](#) to Governor Laura Kelly's desk. This is the Republican tax package passed by the Legislature late last week. Most of the provisions in the bill are proposals that Kelly and Democrat leadership presented in their plan on the first day of the legislative session. However, she's still expected to veto the bill because it moves all Kansans to a single income tax rate that she claims only benefits the highest wage earners.

Governor Kelly has 10 days to sign, veto, or allow the bill to become law without her signature. In the meantime, supporters of HB 2284 are working on securing enough votes for a veto proof override in both the House and Senate.

Governor Kelly's tax bill, [Senate Bill 377](#) is scheduled for a hearing next week in the Senate Tax Committee. The bill includes many parts of the Republican tax plan but eliminates the single income tax rate and adds a sales tax holiday as well as a sales tax exemptions for children's diapers and feminine hygiene products.

### **School Funding, Gun Debates Begin**

The House K-12 Budget Committee held a hearing on [House Bill 2485](#) on Monday, which would change the formula for school funding by using the current school year or the preceding school year enrollment numbers, whichever is greater. Current law allows districts to have a two-year look back in calculating student population, which supporters of the bill say sometimes accounts for the same student twice in base state aid if they moved from one district to another. Some are concerned that mostly rural school districts with declining student populations will be hurt most by the bill.

The House Federal and State Affairs Committee heard a bill on Tuesday that proposes a constitutional amendment recognizing the right to bear arms as a fundamental right, and that any restrictions on such right are subject to the strict scrutiny standard. [House](#)

[Concurrent Resolution 5020](#) would require a two-thirds majority in the House and Senate to pass. If it passes, the question would be placed on an election ballot.

### **World Cup Organizers Lobby for More Funding**

Organizers planning for the 2026 World Cup soccer tournament in Kansas City presented to the House and Senate Commerce Committees on Wednesday. [Click here](#) for the presentation. Kansas will be co-hosting the event with Missouri, who has already committed \$50 million. Governor Kelly included \$20 million in her budget this year, but the request that was made this week called for \$28 million to \$32 million on top of the \$10 million appropriated by the Legislature last year. Supporters say that Kansas alone should see a return on investment of over \$163 million.

Forty-eight teams will play in the event between June 11 and July 19 in three different countries, with over five billion viewers. The last time the United States hosted part of the World Cup was in 1994. Kansas anticipates hosting four team base camps (two in KCK and one each in Lawrence and Manhattan) with games held at Arrowhead Stadium.

### **Unemployment Insurance**

The House and Senate Commerce Committees held a joint informational hearing on [House Bill 2570](#). This bill makes several changes to the unemployment insurance system including: defining benefit year, providing provisions for length of temporary unemployment can be provided, extending the deadline for new accounts following business acquisitions, enabling employers to report claimant work search issues such as ghosting, and gradually increasing the wage base to keep up with inflation and increased benefit payments.

The bill will be scheduled for a formal hearing in the House Commerce Committee as early as next Thursday.

### **Resolutions Block Legislator Pay Raise**

Two Republican legislators announced this week that they plan on introducing resolutions that would block a special interim commission's recommendation to raise the pay for legislators. Senator Caryn Tyson (R-Parker) and Representative Ken Corbett (R-Topeka) are in the process of collecting signatures and have 30 days from the start of the legislative session to pass a resolution through the Legislature.

The Legislative Compensation Commission approved a recommendation in October that would increase the base legislative pay from \$29,000/year to \$43,000/year, hoping to give more Kansans the opportunity to serve in Topeka.

### **State Budget Review**

Budget committees began working agency budgets this week and holding informational hearings on various programs. Legislators typically begin tackling smaller, fee-funded agencies first, such as the Board of Barbering and Board of Accountancy. While fairly straight forward in their budget requests, legislators are always looking at their fee structures and whether changes need to be made to current levels.

The Senate Ways and Means Committee held a hearing on the nursing shortage at state hospitals. Lack of workforce is a challenge for all agencies, but healthcare is experiencing the most acute staffing shortages. Contracting for nursing staff from private companies has been necessary – but very expensive – to fill vacancies at the state hospitals.

The House Appropriations Committee received an update on the current state transportation plan. The Secretary of Transportation reviewed various projects, and how cities and counties are completing desperately needed infrastructure through several cost-share programs available. The committee also discussed the most recent four-county fire in north central Kansas and ways that the state can better respond to weather-related emergencies and wildfires.

More agency budgets will be worked on in the coming weeks, with the largest saved toward the end of the legislative session.

### **Next Week**

Committees have full calendars of briefings and hearings scheduled. Key hearings include:

The House Taxation Committee on Tuesday will hold informational hearing on individual provisions of the [Senate Bill 8](#), which was Vetoed by Governor Kelly last session. Tuesday, they will hear the government competition with local government provision.

The Senate Federal and State Affairs Committee on Tuesday will hold a hearing on [House Bill 2446](#) which prohibits cities and counties from regulating plastic bags and containers.

The House Elections Committee on Tuesday will hear [House Bill 2511](#) which would allow for candidates to identify party affiliation for local elections.

The House Judiciary Committee on Wednesday will hear [House Bill 2510](#) which authorizes discovery of third-party funded litigation.

The Senate Federal and State Affairs Committee on Wednesday will hear [Senate Bill 253](#) which would allow for home delivery of alcohol by local licenses retailers and 3<sup>rd</sup> party delivery services.

The House Judiciary Committee on Thursday will hear [House Bill 2604](#) which would increase the dollar amount in small claims court to \$10,000.