

ACLU Kansas

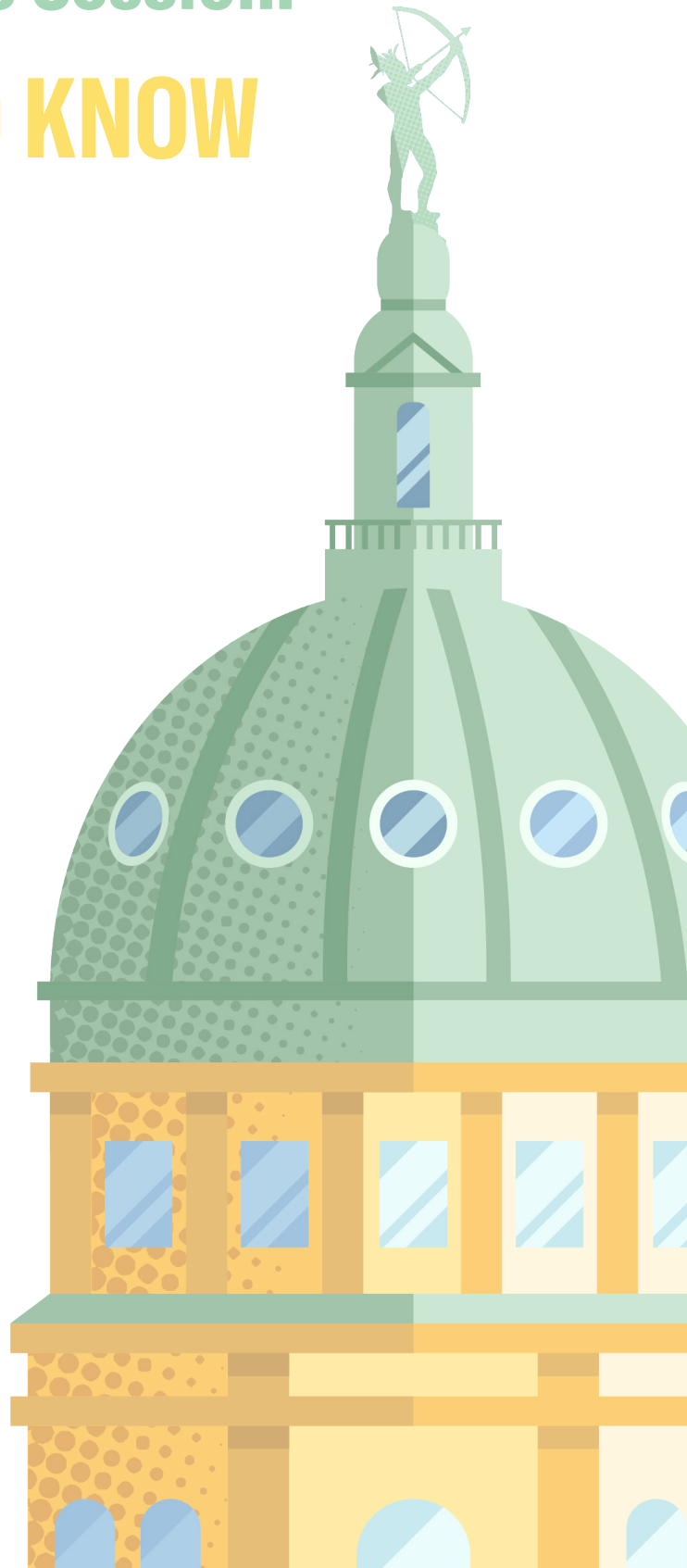
Kansas 2025 Legislative Session:

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

WEEK 1

The Kansas Legislature convened yesterday at 2 PM, marking the beginning of the 2025 legislative session. During the opening ceremonies, all 125 House and 40 Senate members were sworn in for the 2024-2025 term. Governor Laura Kelly, Lt. Governor David Toland, and other statewide officials also entered the third year of their four-year terms.

The results of the November elections—both at the Kansas Capitol and in Washington, D.C.—will play a pivotal role in shaping the state’s road ahead. Let’s dive into what’s in store.



HIGHLIGHTS OF THE WEEK

Restricting Press Access

Speaker Dan Hawkins took the controversial step of removing journalists from the House floor, limiting direct access to legislative proceedings. This raises significant concerns about transparency and accountability during the session.

Cannabis Reform Developments

Conversations continue around cannabis legislation, with a notable push to create a regulated market. Our coalition is working to ensure that equity and justice are central to the policy framework.

Focus on Education Access:

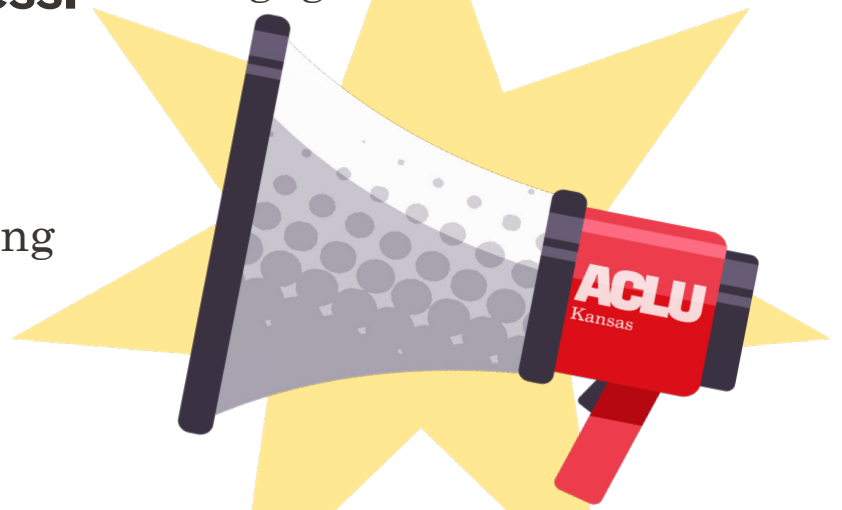
This week brought renewed attention to barriers in education, with debates surrounding increased funding proposals and a push for innovative community-led solutions.

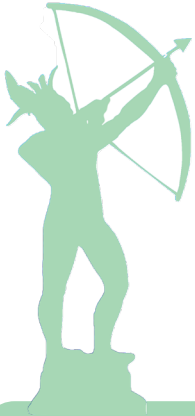
Government “Efficiency” Overhaul

Kansas announced the creation of a new Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE), a move that legislators claim will streamline government functions. Critics, however, worry this reorganization may centralize authority at the expense of checks and balances.

Local Efforts

Alongside legislative activity, we’ve been amplifying local initiatives. From voter education drives to advocacy training sessions, we’re ensuring Kansas communities are engaged and informed.






KANSAS LEGISLATIVE BASICS:

Kansas House of Representatives (2025-2026)

- 88 Republicans (gained 3 seats)
- 37 Democrats
- 19 new Republican members; 69 returning
- 4 new Democrat members; 33 returning
- 1 new Republican member moved from the Senate

Kansas Senate (2025-2026)

- 31 Republicans (gained 2 seats)
- 9 Democrats
- 12 new Republican members; 19 returning
- 1 new Democrat member; 8 returning
- 6 new Republican members moved from the House



KEY TAKEAWAY: Republicans maintain a 2/3 super-majority in both chambers, enabling them to more easily pass measures like constitutional amendments and making it harder for Governor Kelly to sustain vetoes.

Legislative Leadership for 2025

A stylized illustration of the Kansas State Capitol building, showing the dome and the top of the columns. The dome is green with a pattern of small dots and has a statue on top. The building is yellow and orange with blue windows.

Kansas House Leadership

- Speaker: Dan Hawkins (R-Wichita)
- Majority Leader: Chris Croft (R-Overland Park)
- Speaker Pro Tempore: Blake Carpenter (R-Derby)
- Minority Leader: Brandon Woodard (D-Lenexa)*

*Denotes new leadership

Kansas Senate Leadership

- President: Ty Masterson (R-Andover)
- Majority Leader: Chase Blasi (R-Wichita)*
- Minority Leader: Dinah Sykes (D-Lenexa)



Key Committees

Senate Committees

- Ways & Means: Chair Rick Billinger (R-Goodland)
- Public Health & Welfare: Chair Beverly Gossage (R-Eudora)
- New Senate Government Efficiency Committee: Chair Renee Erickson (R-Wichita)
- Fed & State: Chair Mike Thompson (R-Johnson)
- Judiciary: Chair Kellie Warren (R- Johnson)

House Committees

- Elections: Chair Pat Proctor (R-Leavenworth)
- Fed & State: Chair Tom Kessler (R-Wichita)
- Education: Chair Susan Estes (R-Wichita)
- Health & Human: Chair Will Carpenter (R- El Dorado)
- K-12 Education Budget: Chair Jason Goetz (R-Dodge City)

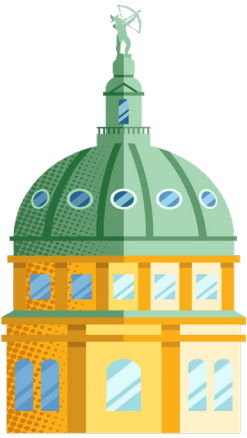
Fiscal Outlook

Kansas faces a 4% revenue loss in 2025 compared to 2024, largely due to recent tax cuts. Although the state's economy is stable, projections show expenses outpacing revenues by \$1.3 billion in 2026.

Meanwhile, the state's rainy-day fund is expected to reach \$1.8 billion.



A new legislative budget committee has proposed a stripped-down “base budget” bill, free of enhancements or one-time allocations, which will set the stage for this year’s budgetary debates.



Legislative Issues to Watch

Education

Voucher proposals are expected to return with fervor.

Medicaid Expansion

Governor Kelly's push enters its seventh year, facing Republican resistance.

Tax Cuts

Property and corporate tax relief remain key priorities for Republican leadership.

Social Issues

Bills targeting transgender care, voter restrictions, and constitutional amendments are likely to resurface.

Cannabis Reform

Medical marijuana continues to be a hot-button issue.