

KLPG Capitol Highlights

2019 Legislature, Week Seven

About KLPG:

KLPG is a bipartisan, voluntary, independent, non-profit corporation comprised of elected county commissioners in rural counties interested in preserving & strengthening constitutional government.



BENEFITS TO EXPANDING MEDICAID

Governor Kelly and several chamber leaders from across the state met with the Health and Human Services Committee to discuss the economic benefits of expanding Medicaid health care coverage to an additional 130,000 low-income Kansans and unlocking federal funds that would pay for 90% of the costs. A new Kansas Health Institute study says expansion would have a net cost of \$47.4 million with a reasonable expectation of a positive economic impact in 2020. Former Kansas Senate President Dave Kerr representing Hutchinson noted that \$6.5 million would go to the bottom line of their hospital so staff may care for newly covered residents who then will return to work contributing \$4.5 million to the local economy. The CEO of Great Bend Chamber of Commerce said 915 people would gain health care coverage in Barton

County. To provide that coverage medical facilities would need to add 25 jobs which would create a \$6 million investment in new health care spending in the community. The CEO of Pittsburg Area Chamber of Commerce expects expansion to benefit their community with an \$11 million impact in health care spending and improved productivity of a healthier workforce. An executive with the Kansas City Chamber proposed that expansion would add 600 jobs in the region and bring in tax revenue and economic benefits that would total \$126 million in Johnson and Wyandotte counties. Lawmakers in the House are holding roundtable discussions on the issue, but so far GOP leadership in both chambers have blocked Medicaid legislation from being considered.

TAX BILL MOVES FORWARD

The Kansas House advanced tax policy Senate Bill 22 this week on a vote of 80-42. That is more than the minimum 63 required for adoption but less than the 84 needed to override the Gubernatorial veto that is expected since Governor Kelly has already made clear a preference for not substantively revising state tax code until the budget is stabilized. The legislation would allow businesses and wealthy individuals to avoid \$187 million in state income taxes, has provisions to lower the state's food sales tax, and imposes a new tax on internet transactions through out-of-state retailers.

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Capitol Highlights is a weekly legislative summary of recent Kansas government, and other statewide news, gathered and compiled independently by Pinegar, Smith & Associates from news media reports.

FIRE FATALITY INVESTIGATIONS

Kansas Fire Marshal Doug Jorgensen spoke in favor of Senate Bill 206 to the Senate Federal and State Affairs Committee this week. Jorgensen urged members to amend state law to require an investigation whenever a person dies as a result of a fire or explosion, as well as when a body is found at the scene of a blaze. Local fire chiefs would be mandated to report the name and address of those deceased persons to the fire marshal's office. He also requested that the bill clarify that fire marshal agents have authority to carry firearms, make arrests, and conduct searches and seizures to better reflect their law enforcement certifications. He shared 6 examples of fatalities from fires or explosions in the past year that weren't well investigated or in some instances not investigated at all. In one case, a death was subsequently revealed to be a homicide. The examples were in both cities with full-time fire crews and smaller communities with volunteer fire departments. The League of Kansas Municipalities and the Johnson County Sheriff's Department spoke out against the law reform, suggesting that it could be interpreted as giving the Kansas Fire Marshal authority to decide who takes the

investigative lead in fire related fatalities.

SCHOOL FUNDING BILL

A Kansas Senate committee passed HB 142, a school spending bill that would add about \$92 million a year for the next four years, or about \$360 million by 2023. It now heads to the Senate floor. As part of the ongoing lawsuit challenging the adequacy of the state's school spending, Attorney General Derek Schmidt has a mid-April deadline to brief the Supreme Court on spending revisions and legislative leaders have promised him action in the coming weeks. Schools for Fair Funding, representing the school districts that are suing the state over funding, spoke against the bill claiming a drafting error has significantly underestimated the final funding total, while Deputy Education Commissioner Dale Dennis, who has been working on school finance issues in Kansas for a half-century, refuted that claim insisting that there is no error. State Board of Education officials spoke in favor of the legislation as well insisting that the bill is error free. A spokesperson for the governor's office said the goal of the bill is to address inflation, end the litigation, and meet the needs of our students and schools.

PROACTIVE AND PROTECTIVE HOUSING LAWS

The Senate Judiciary Committee is considering a bill that would give housing protections to domestic abuse victims, making it easier to get out of costly leases that prevent them from moving to safe locations. The bill is backed by a bipartisan coalition of 26 senators including the chamber's president, vice president and

minority leader. The bill would wipe away the tenant's responsibility for rent after leaving the property in cases of domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking or human trafficking so long as they provide notice. It allows landlords to impose a reasonable termination fee for domestic violence victims who want out of their lease. The bill gives victims a defense for a landlord who wants full rent from tenant who leaves a property to escape abuse. The legislation also makes it illegal to evict someone because they're a victim of domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking or human trafficking. The bill has the support of The Associated Landlords of Kansas which said the bill provides fair and reasonable safeguards for both for the victim and the landlord.

OVERLAND PARK DEVELOPS WITHOUT STAR BONDS

The Overland Park City Council voted 7-5 to approve a developer's application to negotiate a new tax incentive package, without STAR bonds, for the first phase of the \$2 billion proposed office, apartment and retail complex at the site of the former Brookridge Country Club. The application requests \$96 million in tax-increment financing, \$33.7 million from a proposed 1.5% sales tax in the development area, economic development revenue bonds, and asks the city to pay \$26 million towards required road improvements. Nearby residents have opposed the redevelopment plan for years, citing concerns about traffic, flooding and density.