

NEWSLETTERS



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Since the Kansas State Legislature's adjournment early on March 19, Kansas has felt the impact of the global pandemic. The United States' record-low unemployment rates shot up to historically high unemployment rates in roughly one month. Unemployment offices around the country have been overwhelmed with claims. The loss of life and economic impact has been remarkable, and the long-term implications are still hard to comprehend.

This week, Gov. Laura Kelly extended the state of emergency stay-at-home order until May 3 after the projected COVID-19 peak in Kansas was moved back to late April. On Wednesday, the State Finance Council approved Gov. Kelly's funding plan to assist hospitals with the pandemic. The plan includes \$17 million for the Kansas Department of Health and Environment to assist cash-strapped hospitals plus funding for the Adjutant General's Office to procure personal protective equipment for hospitals and emergency workers.

On April 20, the Consensus Revenue Estimating Group (CREG) is scheduled to meet. Each April, the CREG is tasked with estimating the projected state revenue for the upcoming fiscal year – starting July 1 – which is used to finalize the state budget. In March, the Kansas Department of Revenue reported that the March state revenue was essentially flat, with a large state budget surplus. Now, the debate may no longer be about potential tax cuts and revenue enhancements, but perhaps more simply focused on whether the budget bills passed in March and signed by the Governor will now be adequate. The CREG, along with our national leaders, faces a difficult task given the many unresolved questions. How can meaningful budget projections be developed in the face of record-high unemployment, delayed income tax filing and deferred payment until July 15, uncertainty as to how and when the economy can be reopened, and how soon “point-of-care” testing will be available?

During the coming month, debate will focus on the safe timing for reconvening of the 2020 Legislature before Sine Die adjournment. Also, consideration must promptly be given to how to reopen the Kansas economy giving reasonable consideration to public safety, including considerations regarding the predicted “second wave” of coronavirus infections. Finally, if the Legislature can reconvene this spring, what might an omnibus budget bill look like in an uncertain COVID-19-infected world? Certainly, routine bills with modest fiscal notes could be in jeopardy.

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Kansas Legislative Insights is a publication developed by the Governmental Relations & Public Policy Law practice group of Foulston Siefkin LLP. It is designed to inform business executives, human resources and governmental relations professionals, and general counsel about current developments occurring in current Kansas legislation. Published regularly during the Kansas legislative session, it focuses on issues involving health care, insurance, public finance, taxation, financial institutions, business & economic development, energy, real estate & construction, environmental, agribusiness, employment, and workers compensation. Bill summaries are by necessity brief, however, for additional information on any issue before the Kansas Legislature, contact Foulston Siefkin's Governmental Relations & Public Policy Law practice group leader, James P. Rankin at 785.233.3600 or jrankin@foulston.com.

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