

NEWSLETTERS



KANSAS LEGISLATIVE INSIGHTS NEWSLETTER | DECEMBER 21, 2018

2019 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The 2019 Kansas Legislature convenes on January 14 with the formal swearing in of the new Legislature, statewide officers, and inaugural activities for Governor Laura Kelly. The Kansas House of Representatives will have 30 new faces and the Kansas Senate will have four new Senators. The December House leadership elections featured major changes in both political parties.

The legislative calendar shows February 28 as the last day for non-exempt bills in committee to *turn around* to the other chamber. April 5 is the scheduled date for first adjournment. The veto session convenes on May 1.

In the next several weeks, Governor-Elect Kelly will reveal the names of those selected for Cabinet positions and her staff. She has announced Will Lawrence as her Chief of Staff. Last session, he was Chief of Staff for Senate Minority Leader Sen. Anthony Hensley.

Interested observers will be watching for the names of the Committee Chairs, Vice Chairs and Ranking Minority Members for key House committees before the House convenes. Generally, the House committee assignments aren't finalized until the opening week of the session, as a few members switch committees with each other if approved by leadership.

HOUSE LEADERSHIP ELECTIONS

Except for the Speaker of the House, Ron Ryckman, virtually all the House Democratic and Republican leadership changed during the December 2 House leadership elections. The House Republican leadership team will feature five new faces in the roles of Speaker Pro Tem, House Majority Leader, House Assistant Majority Leader, House Majority Whip, and House Majority Caucus Chair. The House Republican leadership will be more conservative, with incumbent moderate House Majority Leader Rep. Don Hineman (R-Dighton) being defeated by conservative Rep. Dan Hawkins (R-Wichita) by a 48-35 vote. This is the new House Republican leadership lineup:

Speaker – Rep. Ron Ryckman, R-Olathe

Majority Leader – Rep. Dan Hawkins, R-Wichita

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Speaker Pro Tem – Rep. Blaine Finch, R-Ottawa

Assistant Majority Leader – Rep. Les Mason, R-McPherson

Majority Whip – Rep. Blake Carpenter, R-Wichita

Majority Caucus Chair – Rep. Susan Humphries, R-Wichita

Except for Rep. Barbara Ballard (D-Lawrence), who was unopposed for Caucus Chair, the House Democrats will also have new leadership in January. Incumbent House Minority Leader Rep. Jim Ward (D-Wichita) was defeated by Rep. Tom Sawyer (D-Wichita) by a 24-16 vote. Sawyer was House Minority Leader from 1987-1998. Rep. Valdenia Winn defeated Assistant Minority Leader Rep. Stan Frownfelter by a 21-19 vote. The House Democratic leadership is noted below.

Minority Leader – Rep. Tom Sawyer, D-Wichita

Assistant Minority Leader – Rep. Valdenia Winn, D-Kansas City

Minority Whip – Rep. Jim Gartner, D-Topeka

Agenda Chair – Rep. Brett Parker, D-Overland Park

Caucus Chair – Rep. Barbara Ballard, D-Lawrence

Policy Chair – Rep. Eileen Horn, D-Lawrence

In addition to the House shift to the right, there are other noteworthy changes. Four of the six Republican leaders are from urban areas, with half from Wichita. The other change is that no one in leadership from either party is from the western half of the state. This underscores the ongoing population shift from rural to urban areas. The implications are obvious, with re-districting looming on the horizon in the next several years. It is important to note that women comprise half of House Democratic leadership for the first time.

NEW FACES IN THE KANSAS SENATE

There will be at least four new faces in the Kansas Senate. On December 1, Wichita Democratic leaders selected Mary Ware to replace Sen. Lynn Rogers, who was elected Lt. Governor in November. State representative Vic Miller (D-Topeka) will be replacing Governor-Elect Laura Kelly in the Kansas Senate. On December 14, Shawnee County District 20 precinct persons elected Eric Rucker to replace Sen. Vicki Schmidt who was elected Insurance Commissioner. Rucker was a top aide to former Kansas AG Phil Kline and was hired as an Assistant Secretary of State by Secretary of State Kris Kobach in 2011. As KLI reported last month, Kevin Braun (R-Kansas City) will be replacing Sen. Steve Fitzgerald, who resigned in September.

Last summer, Senate President Susan Wagle stripped Sen. Barbara Bollier of her Vice-Chairmanship of the Senate Public Health and Welfare Committee after she openly supported several Democrats in the August Primary. On December 12, 2018, Sen. Bollier switched parties and became a Democrat. Sen. Dinah Sykes also switched from previous affiliation of Republican to Democrat on December 19, 2018. Previously, Sen. John Doll became an Independent to run as Greg Orman's Lt. Governor. The composition of the 2019 Kansas Senate is now 28 Republicans, 11 Democrats and 1 Independent. This does not change the current Republican to Democrat ratio on Senate committees.

On December 12, 2018, Senate President Senator Susan Wagle announced a reshuffling of several major committee chairs and some vice chairs. Sen. Gene Suellentrop, (R-Wichita) will be replacing Sen. Schmidt as the Senate Public Health and Welfare Chair with Sen. Ty Masterson (R-Wichita) replacing Bollier as Vice-Chair. Sen. Wagle replaced Senate Vice President Sen. Jeff Longbine (R-Emporia) as Chair of the Senate Financial Institutions and Insurance Committee. He is replaced by Sen. Rob Olson (R-Olathe). Sen. Ty Masterson replaces Sen. Olson

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as chair of the Senate Utilities Committee. These are among the most notable changes.

GENERAL ELECTION TURNOUT

On November 30, the State Board of Canvass met in Topeka to certify the election results. The composition of the House of Representatives initially remained 85 Republicans and 40 Democrats; however, as of December 19, the new House composition changed when Overland Park moderate Republican Stephanie Clayton switched to the Democratic Party. Now, the House composition is Republicans 84 and Democrats 41. Secretary of State Kris Kobach reported that 58% of the 1.8 million registered Kansas voters showed up at the polls. It was a record for a non-Presidential election year. Of those voting, 40% voted early in person or by mail.

INTERIM UPDATE

On November 29, the Joint Legislative Transportation Task Force met and approved a non-controversial transportation plan for the next decade. It focused on the 21 delayed projects from the decade-old T-WORKS transportation plan and road maintenance. Funds were transferred from the transportation plan to finance tax cuts in recent years. The plan has no new projects, no specific budget number, and encourages stable ongoing funding for roads. The committee discussed a wide range of possibilities to assure consistent funding, but no consensus was reached. Interim committees are finalizing their recommendations for the 2019 session.

November tax revenues were up only \$2.7 million above estimates for the month. The Kansas Department of Revenue numbers reflect receipts 8.9% above last fiscal year. These numbers are for the first five months of Fiscal Year 2019.

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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