



Legislative UPDATE

News & Information For the
People of the 29th District

January 24, 2020

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THIS WEEK AT THE CAPITOL

With the holiday on Monday commemorating Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., it's been a short week at the Capitol. The Senate took action on one bill this week. The rest of the time was spent in committee meetings where a number of bills had scheduled hearings.

Committee hearings and legislative proceedings are now live streamed from the Kansas Legislature's website. Archived recordings are available as well. Visit www.kslegislature.org and click on "Audio/Video" in the upper righthand corner, next to the search box on the home page, to reveal a drop-down menu. To view a full schedule of committees, choose "Statehouse Live & Archive" from the drop-down menu. To listen to legislative proceedings, select either the House or Senate audio stream.

You can also track bills on the Legislature's website by clicking on the "Bills & Laws" link. You are welcome to testify before a committee on any issue important to you. A written copy of your testimony is required at least 24 hours prior to the committee hearing.

I welcome your input on any of these issues. Please feel free to visit or contact me at 316-210-4380 or oletha29th@aol.com, if you should have any questions or concerns. Or stop by my legislative office, located in room 135-E of the Topeka Statehouse.

FIRST BILL OF SESSION

The Senate passed this week its first piece of legislation this session. [Senate Bill 45](#) increases penalties for involuntary manslaughter or aggravated battery against a public safety sector employee to a severity level two, person felony and level three, person felony, respectively. Driving under the influence which results in great bodily harm or disfigurement to a public safety sector employee would also be a severity level three, person felony.

The bill defines public safety sector employee as an employee of any law enforcement office, sheriff's department, municipal fire department, volunteer and non-volunteer fire protection association, emergency management department, emergency medical service provider, or public works department.

PAGE OPPORTUNITIES

Each session, Senators are allowed up to 20 Senate Pages. Pages spend the day running errands for legislators and sit on the Senate floor during daily proceedings. It's a great opportunity for students to get a first-hand experience in Kansas state government. If you know a middle school or high school student who would be interested in paging, please contact my office at [\(785\) 296-7387](tel:7852967387).

ABORTION DEBATE UPDATE

Both versions of the constitutional amendments ([HCR 5019](#) and [SCR 1613](#)) seeking to eliminate abortion rights in Kansas passed out of their respective committees this week. They are now headed to their respective chambers for full consideration. A vote is anticipated as early as next week. The measures require two-thirds majority vote (27 votes in the Senate; 84 votes in the House) to pass. They cannot be vetoed by the Governor.

When voters see something as serious as a change to the Constitution on the ballot, they assume the Legislature has done a thorough job vetting the amendment. That has not happened with these amendments.

Both amendments were introduced last Thursday. A joint hearing was held the following Tuesday, after a three-day weekend and a day of inclement weather that shut down most of Northeastern Kansas. There were arbitrary deadlines initially set for submitting testimony and no easy way to submit electronically. Then, on Wednesday, both House and Senate committees took action on the amendments with limitations on how the public could watch or listen to the proceedings. The House Committee on Federal and State Affairs hadn't been posted notice of their meeting publicly and the Senate Judiciary Committee's live stream cut off just before they took action.

The process surrounding these amendments has been treated as political fodder and not as the serious matter that it is.

AMENDING KANSAS ACT AGAINST DISCRIMINATION

A hearing is scheduled for Tuesday, January 28, in the Senate Committee on Federal State Affairs for [SB 250](#), which seeks to amend the definition of “race” in the Kansas Act Against Discrimination. The bill, which I introduced would add traits historically associated with race, including hair texture and protective hairstyles to the definition.

OTHER BILLS TO WATCH

- **SHELDON'S LAW** [SB 218](#) was originally introduced as SB 37 by Senator Tom Holland of Baldwin City. It requires clergy to report certain abuse and neglect of children. The Senate passed it in 2019 on a vote of 39-0. It's now in the House Committee on Federal and State Affairs awaiting a hearing.
- **NATURAL DISASTER TAX ABATEMENTS** [SB 242](#), introduced by Senator Tom Holland of Baldwin City in response to the EF-4 tornado that devastated certain parts of Douglas and Leavenworth counties in late May 2019, establishes tax abatements for agricultural buildings destroyed by natural disasters. It has been referred to the Senate Committee on Taxation and Assessment.
- **GOLDEN YEARS PROPERTY TAX FREEZE** Introduced by Senator Tom Holland of Baldwin City, SB 104 establishes a property tax freeze for over 76,000 qualifying senior and disabled veteran households. The homestead would have to be appraised at \$350,000 or less and homeowners would have to have a household income of \$50,000 or less. The bill passed the Senate in 2019 on a vote of 39-0. It is now in the House Committee on Taxation, which had a hearing on it on April 3, 2019. It's awaiting further action.

IMPORTANT STATE PHONE NUMBERS

Here is a list of numbers I often receive requests for during the Legislative Session. I hope you will find this information helpful.

Attorney General (888) 428-8436	Department on Aging (800) 432-3535	Highway Conditions (800) 585-7623
Child Abuse Hotline (800) 922-5330	Driver's License Bureau (785) 296-3963	Housing Hotline (800) 752-4422
Consumer Protection (800) 432-2310	Fraud Hotline (800) 432-3919	KanCare Consumer Assistance (866) 305-5147
Crime Tip Hotline (800) 572-7463	KPERS (888) 275-5737	Kansas Jobs (785) 235-5627
Crime Victim Referral (800) 828-9745	Governor's Office (877) 579-6757	Kansas Lottery (785) 296-5700

Kansas State Library
(800) 432-3924

Legislative Hotline
(800) 432-3924

School Safety Hotline
(877) 626-8203
Social Security
(800) 772-1213

DCF

(785) 296-1491

Suicide Prevention
Hotline
(800) 273-8255

Tax Refund Status Info
(800) 894-0318

Taxpayer Assistance
(785) 368-8222

Unclaimed Property
(800) 432-0386

Vital Statistics
(Birth Certificates)
(785) 296-1400

Victims of Human
Trafficking
(888) 373-7888