

LEGISLATIVE REPORT

APWA KC Metro

Kansas Legislative Report

January 13, 2023

The 2023 Legislative Session is officially underway. Governor Laura Kelly was sworn into office for her second term on the capitol steps Monday morning. The Governor's anticipated State of the State address, outlining her vision for the next year, is delayed due to the Governor testing positive for COVID. The address will be given later this month.

The Kansas House looks very different this session. Along with a class of 35 freshman, the top four House leadership posts have new leaders with 13 committees with a new chair. The Senate too, which did not stand for election, saw three recent resignations, causing a reshuffling of committee rosters.

House and Senate committees held their first meetings of the session with a few already beginning to receive agency updates. Approximately 60 bills have been introduced with hundreds more promised to surface over the coming weeks. House and Senate leadership pledged their cooperation and their session calendar plans to wrap up session by the end of April.

Water Policy & Funding

Water promises to be a dominating topic of the 2023 Session. Many will seek increasing the state's financial investment for water but with varying approaches for the source of the new money. The House Committee on Water looks like quite different than last session. Rep. Jim Minnix (R-Scott City) and Rep. Cyndi Howerton (R-Wichita) ascend to the chair and vice-chair role, respectively, while Rep. Lindsay Vaughn (D-Overland Park) remains the ranking Democrat member. Six freshman are also added to the committee.

The House Committee on Water kicked off with a presentation by former Chief Water Engineer David Barfield, P.E. His presentation provided a comprehensive history of

water laws, and agency oversight. Next week the committee is scheduled to receive an updates from Kansas Water Office Director Connie Owen and Chief Water Engineer Earl Lewis, P.E.

On the Senate side, water continues to be handled by the Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources. Next week the committee will receive a general update from the Kansas Department of Agriculture.

In the Governor's budget, the State Water Plan is proposed to be fully funded by making the \$6M transfer from the State General Fund, with another \$2M to the Water Plan Fund from economic development funds. In addition, the proposed budget recommends a one-time expenditure of \$53M from the State General Fund to pay off reservoir debts from Lake Perry and Milford Lake. This payoff is estimated to save nearly \$30M in interest over the life of the contracts.

Transportation Policy & Funding

As it relates to transportation, the Governor's budget proposes to continue fully funding the State Highway Fund. The House Committee on Appropriations and Senate Committee on Ways and Means will review the proposed budget and craft their own versions over the coming weeks.

The House Transportation Committees, where transportation policy is discussed, look quite different, especially in the House with all new committee leadership. Rep. Shannon Francis (R-Liberal) is the new chair, Rep. Lance Neelly (R- Tonganoxie) and Rep. Barbara Ballard (D-Lawrence) is the ranking Democrat. On the Senate side, Sen. Mike Petersen (R-Wichita) remains the chair while Sen. Rick Kloos (R-Topeka) and Sen. Ethan Corson (D-Prairie Village) were named vice chair and ranking democrat, respectively.

Thank you and please let us know if you have any questions.

Travis Lowe