



GOVERNOR LAURA KELLY

MESSAGE FROM THE GOVERNOR

REGARDING LINE-ITEM VETO OF HOUSE BILL 2513

For eight years, I have submitted responsible budgets that made investments in Kansans and that put the state's financial house back in order. Each budget was a partnership between the Legislature and me to ensure that, together, we passed a budget that reflects the values of Kansans from every corner of the state. The Legislature has abandoned that partnership, wholly setting aside my commonsense budget recommendation, and instead passing House Bill 2513. This is a budget that does not represent the values of all Kansans, cuts funding for critical services, and relies on our rainy-day fund to prop up our ending balance in the out years. In short, this is a bad budget.

Last fall, I toured the state to hear directly from Kansans and to ask them what they would like to see included in their budget. Two of the main themes that emerged from this listening tour were to fully fund education, including special education, and to continue investments in mental health services. This budget misses the mark on both of those items.

While I am appreciative of the \$6.0 million increased funding for Special Education, this is far short of what our schools are spending each year to provide these services. My budget called for an incremental \$50.6 million in Special Education funding, which would have put us on the path to fully funding these services. By under-funding Special Education, school districts are forced to rely on their general operating budgets to make up for the shortfall. This is a disservice to every Kansas student.

Additionally, this budget inexplicably cuts funding for mental health services in schools. At a time when we should be supporting our students and providing more services, a spur-of-the-moment decision was made to cut funding for school-based mental health services by over 37 percent. This funding cut did not receive a hearing, was not based on feedback from providers, parents, or students, and had no data to support the logic for this ill-informed reduction. Cutting funding for mental health services for our students runs counter to every discussion that has occurred over the past year, including the logic that was behind the school cell phone ban that I signed into law this year.

This budget also fails to recognize the hard work that state employees do every day throughout the year to deliver critical services for our citizens. My budget called for a 2.5 percent pay increase for all state employees to reward them for their efforts, and to help them keep up with the pace of rising costs. The Legislature chose to ignore this recommendation and instead only provided a 1.0 percent pay increase for executive branch employees. However, the Legislature had no problem finding the funding to provide themselves with a 4.4 percent pay increase, and a 10.0 percent pay increase for their own staff. The funding to increase Legislator and Legislative

staff pay was never debated in a hearing during the session. It was simply added to the base budget from the get-go and only came to light when it became clear that the Legislature was going to attempt to abandon any pay increases for executive branch employees. This is disrespectful to employees across the state. Our employees deserve better, and our citizens deserve more transparency from their elected officials.

This budget includes a 1.5 percent cut to operating budgets for most state agencies. This is purported to be an across-the-board budget reduction. But make no mistake; this is anything but an across-the-board cut. In fact, the Legislature exempted their own budget from this budget cut, holding harmless a budget for their branch of government that has doubled since fiscal year 2022. It also exempts pet projects that were added during this budget cycle, effectively protecting pork spending, while asking agencies to cut funding for core services that have been in place for years. The result will be a reduction in scope of the programs that every day Kansans have come to rely on, while protecting funding for special interests.

While the overall budget is disappointing and falls short in many areas, there are areas that received much needed funding enhancements. This budget contains the funding necessary to fully stand up the Kansas Office of Early Childhood. This Office will consolidate services currently housed in multiple agencies into one agency, whose sole mission is to focus on early childhood services. Additionally, this budget continues to fully fund the state water program, making needed investments in water programming, which will help safeguard one of the state's most precious resources.

I urge the Legislature to return to the days of partnering with the Governor to develop a budget that is representative of all Kansans, invests in the future of our state, and that provides stability for years to come. As elected officials, our citizens have placed a great deal of trust in us to work together to be good stewards of their resources, and we should strive to answer this call.

Therefore, pursuant to Article 2, Section 14(b) of the Constitution of the State of Kansas, I hereby return House Bill 2513 with my signature approving the bill, except for the items enumerated below.

Board of Nursing – Nurse Fair Treatment and Recovery Fund

Sec. 15(b)-(c) have been line-item vetoed in their entirety.

The creation of this fund could increase the Board of Nursing's exposure to lawsuits and place financial pressure on the resources the agency needs to do its job. Additionally, this proviso sets an unusual precedent that would complicate the existing process for claims against state agencies. Claims against the Board should be brought to and considered through the existing Joint Committee on Special Claims Against the State process.

Legislature – Legislative Salary Increases

The portion of Sec. 26(a) that reads as follows has been line-item vetoed:

Operations (including official hospitality) (428-00-1000 0103).....\$24,688,536

Provided, That any unencumbered balance in the operations (including official hospitality) account in excess of \$100 as of June 30, 2026, is hereby reappropriated for fiscal year 2027: Provided further, That expenditures may be made from this account, pursuant to vouchers approved by the chairperson or vice chairperson of the legislative coordinating council, to pay compensation and travel expenses and subsistence expenses or allowances as authorized by K.S.A. 75-3212, and amendments thereto, for members and associate members of the advisory committee to the Kansas commission on interstate cooperation established under K.S.A. 46-407a, and amendments thereto, for attendance at meetings of the advisory committee that are authorized by the legislative coordinating council, except that: (1) The legislative coordinating council may establish restrictions or limitations, or both, on travel expenses, subsistence expenses or allowances, or any combination thereof; paid to members and associate members of such advisory committee; and (2) any person who is an associate member of such advisory committee, by reason of such person having been accredited by the national conference of commissioners on uniform state laws as a life member of that organization, shall receive the same travel expenses and subsistence expenses for attendance at meetings of the advisory committee as a regular member, but shall receive no per diem compensation: And provided further, That expenditures may be made from this account for services, facilities and supplies provided for legislators in addition to those provided under the approved budget and for related copying, facsimile transmission and other services provided to persons other than legislators, in accordance with policies and any restrictions or limitations prescribed by the legislative coordinating council: And provided further, That no expenditures shall be made from this account for any meeting of any joint committee, or of any subcommittee of any joint committee, chargeable to fiscal year 2027 unless such meeting is approved by the legislative coordinating council: And provided further, That, notwithstanding the provisions of K.S.A. 45-116, and amendments thereto, or any other statute, no expenditures shall be made from this account for the printing and distribution of copies of the permanent journals of the senate or the house of representatives to each member of the legislature during fiscal year 2027:

And provided further, That, notwithstanding the provisions of K.S.A. 77-138, and amendments thereto, or any other statute, no expenditures shall be made from this account for the printing and distribution of complete sets of the Kansas Statutes Annotated to each member of the legislature in excess of one complete set of the Kansas Statutes Annotated to each member at the commencement of the member's first term as legislator during fiscal year 2027: And provided further, That, notwithstanding the provisions of K.S.A. 77-138, and amendments thereto, or any other statute, no expenditures shall be made from this account for the printing and delivery of a set of the cumulative supplements of the Kansas Statutes Annotated to each member of the legislature in excess of one cumulative supplement set of the Kansas Statutes Annotated to each member of the legislature during fiscal year 2027: And provided further, That, notwithstanding the provisions of K.S.A. 77-165, and amendments thereto, or any other statute, no expenditures shall be made from this account for the printing and reimbursement thereto, or any other statute, expenditures may be made from this account to reimburse members of the legislature for expenses incurred in printing correspondence with constituents: And provided further, That no expenses shall be reimbursed unless a legislator has first obtained approval for such printing by the director of legislative administrative services: And provided further, That such reimbursements shall only be issued after a legislator provides written receipts showing such expense to the director of legislative administrative services: And provided further, That the maximum amount reimbursed to any legislator shall be equal to or less than the maximum amount allotted to any legislator for constituent correspondence pursuant to policies adopted by the legislative coordinating council: And provided further, That in addition to the provisions of the Kansas legislative intern program pursuant to legislative coordinating council policy 37, expenditures shall be made by the above agency from this account in fiscal year 2027 to pay for the actual mileage of Kansas legislative interns traveling to the capitol for the required minimum of 12 days of attendance at the capitol.

I do not make the decision to veto the Legislature's operating budget lightly. However, I feel it is the only appropriate response given the Legislature's refusal to provide a meaningful pay increase for state employees within the executive branch. The Legislature's operating budget contains a 4.4 percent pay increase for Legislators. This is on top of the 93 percent pay increase Legislators gave themselves two years ago. It also includes a 10 percent pay increase for Legislative Branch employees.

The 1 percent pay increase for state employees in this budget is nothing but an afterthought despite the vital work these employees do, from preserving public safety to clearing roads. It shows a total lack of respect for the hard work Executive Branch employees do on a day-in and day-out basis. And it's just plain wrong.

Kansans deserve a Legislature that is fair, transparent, and does the right thing, not one that gives state employees scraps while lining their own pockets. The Legislature must fund the 2.5 percent pay increase that I called for in my budget. It's the right thing to do and our state employees deserve it.

Office of the Governor – Child Advocacy Center Grants

The portion of Sec. 30(a) that reads as follows has been line-item vetoed:

And provided further, That expenditures shall be made from such account whereby child advocacy centers are funded in order of the date of establishment starting with the most recently established child advocacy center.

This language would require grants awarded to Child Advocacy Center be funded in the order of the date of establishment, starting with the most recently established centers. While well-intentioned, this language presents procedural challenges for the Governor's Grants Program and would be antithetical to the current grant distribution process, where funds are prioritized based on which Centers have the greatest needs for support. This proviso could ultimately harm the availability of services for child victims across the state, as the largest and oldest centers often serve the largest populations of victims, and therefore have the greatest need for state grant support.

State Treasurer – Funding for Pregnancy Crisis Centers

Sec. 37(a) has been line-item vetoed in its entirety.

I continue to believe that the pregnancy crisis center program has no place within the Office of the State Treasurer. This program, which has never been requested by the State Treasurer's Office, spends taxpayer dollars on largely unregulated pregnancy resource centers and sidesteps the will of Kansans who have made it clear that the Legislature should not intrude on women's private medical decisions. I have consistently vetoed this proviso each year because I believe that Kansans deserve unbiased support and medically reliable information throughout their pregnancies from licensed medical professionals.

State Treasurer – Sweetheart Loan Using Taxpayer Funds

Sec. 37(e) has been line-item vetoed in its entirety.

The Legislature added this provision, which would provide a \$50 million loan of state dollars to a private company at a discounted rate, despite the fact it was not requested by any state agency and the origins of the request are murky at best. It is not the place of the government to pick winners and losers in the business sector, and I am not comfortable exposing the taxpayers of Kansas to the financial risks of this sweetheart deal. This company should seek funding through the existing private institutions for business entities to acquire loans, just like mom-and-pop businesses across Kansas do everyday.

Department of Insurance – Restricting Communications Budget

Sec. 38(d) has been line-item vetoed in its entirety.

I do not understand why the Legislature singled out the Department of Insurance and restricted the agency's communications budget when it did not take the same action against the office of any other statewide elected official. If this is about reducing spending in government, the funding limitation should have been applied across the board.

KPERS – KEY Fund Transfer

Sec. 47 has been line-item vetoed in its entirety.

The transfer of funds from the Kansas endowment for youth fund to the children's initiative fund has already occurred in fiscal year 2026, thus making this section duplicative. This transfer should not occur twice; therefore, I am vetoing this section in its entirety.

Department of Administration – Parking Privileges for Legislators

Sec. 53(b) and Sec. 54(w) have been line-item vetoed in their entirety.

These two sections were inserted into the budget to create special parking privileges for legislators who were unhappy about following parking rules that apply to the general public. Creating special parking privileges for oneself should not be the Legislature's focus—especially when their existing taxpayer-funded parking garage is located two blocks away. Kansans expect their elected officials to address real problems—not carve out exceptions for personal convenience. The current parking policy exists to protect the state from potential liability and damage claims. Allowing unrestricted parking after work hours would increase the state's exposure to such risks and is not a responsible use of taxpayer money. Furthermore, the Department of Administration would have no practical way to verify whether individuals using the parking facilities after hours are state employees or Legislators. This is irresponsible policy and is not an ethical use of public resources.

Department of Administration – Restricting Press Access to the Statehouse

Sec. 54(s) has been line-item vetoed in its entirety.

Last year, I vetoed a similar provision in the budget that imposed barriers on the Kansas Capitol press corps which hindered their ability to do their job efficiently. This item once again attacks a fundamental democratic principle our country was founded on—a free press. This not only imposes a similar barrier, but goes even further, making it even more difficult for the press to effectively report on the actions occurring in the People's House. The Legislature should be searching for ways to make the lawmaking process more transparent, not erecting new obstacles that hinder the press in doing its job.

Department of Administration – Government Inefficiency

Sec. 54(t) has been line-item vetoed in its entirety.

The requirements placed upon the Department of Administration in this section epitomize inefficiency and bureaucratic red tape. This section would require the agency to expend state resources to locate federal tax forms—which are already available through other means for many organizations—and retain them on state databases, only to re-post them on state websites. This would also require the department to post sensitive tax identification information for these entities onto a publicly accessible website. In addition, this section requires the department to develop novel and undefined calculations for services that myriad organizations are providing for Kansans. This confusing concept did not grow organically through the committee process, or through stakeholders demanding answers. Rather, it was introduced on the fly as an amendment to be attached to a budget for an agency whose budget was already complete. Furthermore, the agency was not asked to provide any information on the burden this section would place upon them, the feasibility of even being able to fulfill the requirements of this proviso nor did these new requirements come with additional funding to complete these redundant tasks.

Department of Administration – Increasing Bureaucracy in the State Grant Process

Sec. 54(u) has been line-item vetoed in its entirety.

Similar to the immediately preceding section, the requirements placed upon the Department of Administration in this section epitomize inefficiency and bureaucratic red tape. Instead of allowing the department to focus its limited resources on continuing to operate government in an efficient manner, this section would require its employees to retroactively develop performance measures and undefined metrics dating back ten years for any organization having received state funding during that timeframe, without a defined outcome in mind. The Department of Administration already conducts thorough analysis and compiles comprehensive reporting of all state agency program expenditures each year, the results of which are audited by an independent, nationally recognized audit firm and posted for public consumption. Mandating additional busy work for the department is simply a waste of taxpayer resources.

Department of Administration – Exposing Sensitive Personal Information to Political Appointees

Sec. 54(y) has been line-item vetoed in its entirety.

There is no conceivable reason that a staffer reporting directly to legislative leadership should have unrestricted, administrator-level access to state employee personnel files, yet this is exactly what this section would provide for. Additionally, these politically appointed staffers would have unrestricted access to the sensitive personal information—including social security numbers and banking account information—for every state employee, and every citizen or entity to have ever received any funding from the state over the past ten years. State and federal law provide strict protections around access to personally identifiable information for good reason. The Department of Administration already hosts a publicly available database where every single financial transaction passing through the state is posted for public transparency. This data is posted to ensure that the state opens its books to the public while simultaneously protecting the sensitive personal information it is charged with safeguarding. I would urge lawmakers

interested in reviewing this data to make use of the publicly available resources already in place, rather than attempting to circumvent privacy rules for their own political games.

Department of Revenue and Department of Commerce – Endangering Confidential Taxpayer Data

Sec. 60(c), Sec. 61(i), Sec. 64(r), and 65(s) have been line-item vetoed in their entirety.

These provisions would require the Department of Revenue and the Department of Commerce to disclose individual taxpayer information. This would be an unprecedented release of taxpayer and business information. The Department of Commerce routinely reports to the Legislature on the status of the APEX program and the amount of funds claimed under its credits. If the Legislature wants information about the amount of APEX credits claimed, the Department of Commerce is happy to share that data.

Department of Health and Environment – Vaccine Schedule

Sec. 72(l) and Sec. 74(p) have been line-item vetoed in their entirety.

The recent changes to the childhood, adolescent, and adult immunization schedules issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) stand to create confusion among parents about which vaccines their families should receive, especially when these decisions are made behind closed doors. Kansans deserve clear communication, not a lack of transparency, when it comes to vaccine recommendations, so they can navigate these decisions with their doctors. Making abrupt changes to these longstanding vaccine schedules erodes trust in scientific evidence and the safety and efficacy of vaccines, ultimately endangering the health of Kansans and our communities.

Department of Health and Environment and Department for Children and Families – Forcing State Agencies to Break Federal Law

Sec. 74(o) and Sec. 81(g) have been line-item vetoed in their entirety.

The National Voter Registration Act of 1993 requires that anyone applying for or receiving public assistance be offered the opportunity to register to vote at the time of initial application or eligibility review, and at each report of a change of address. Kansas falls under the jurisdiction of the 10th Circuit Court of Appeals, which previously held that if an applicant does not respond to the voter registration question, the relevant state agency must still send them a voter registration form. Therefore, by prohibiting state agencies from expending funds to deliver these forms, the Legislature is once again ordering my administration to ignore federal law and will almost certainly force the state into costly litigation.

Department of Health and Environment – Infringing on Kansans’ Constitutional Rights

Sec. 74(q) has been line-item vetoed in its entirety.

On August 2, 2022, Kansas voted to cement their constitutional right to reproductive freedom. Ever since then, the Legislature has continued to employ backdoor tactics that chip away at Kansans' access to these vital health care services. This proviso is no different. By attempting to implement this restrictive policy through a budget proviso, the Legislature has subverted the will of Kansans and intentionally avoided holding a public hearing to understand the full impact of this policy or learn how providers would be affected by it.

Department for Aging and Disability Services – Restoring Funding for Mental Health Services in Schools

Sec. 77(b) has been line-item vetoed in its entirety.

Student mental health is a crisis impacting our youngest Kansans. Rather than properly addressing this crisis, the Legislature has decided to cut \$6 million in critical funding to support our students and provide essential mental health support to them while in school. Additionally, the Legislature has decided to lapse \$4.4 million of funding for this important endeavor in the current fiscal year. Despite these efforts, I am proud to restore these funds in the current year through this veto, ensuring Kansas kids will have access to the mental health services they need.

Department for Aging and Disability Services – Fair Funding for Mental Health Services in Schools

The portion of Sec. 78(a) that reads as follows has been line-item vetoed:

Provided further, That expenditures shall be made by the above agency from such account during fiscal year 2027 in an amount of \$1,500,000 for qualified schools:

In one of its more egregious moves this session, the Legislature cut \$6 million in funding for the Mental Health Intervention Team Program, which provides critical mental health support to our students. This program brings mental health interventions and support into our school buildings, reducing barriers to care that students and families might traditionally face.

I am proud that Democrats and Republicans came together to ban cell phone usage in our Kansas schools. During legislative debate and commentary on that policy, we heard time and again that this ban was critical to addressing the mental health crisis facing our young Kansans. Those sentiments ring hollow given that the same Legislature claims to be concerned about student mental health actually cut critical funding to support efforts to combat that crisis.

Our students deserve better.

While I cannot add the funding cut by the Legislature back to the budget, I believe that the program should be more fairly administered if those funds are to be cut. In the state's FY26 budget, it provided over \$16 million for this program, of which \$1.5 million was directed to support mental health intervention teams at qualified non-public schools. In the FY27 budget, the Legislature cut the total appropriation to about \$10.0 million, while retaining the requirement

that \$1.5 million of that total be used for nonpublic schools. I do not believe that the public schools alone should bear the brunt of this disastrous cut.

Thus, I have line-itemed vetoed the requirement that \$1.5 million be appropriated for these non-public schools. If this program is to be cut, funding totals for our public and non-public schools should be reduced proportionally.

Department for Aging and Disability Services – Information on Medicaid Services

Sec. 78(dd) has been line-item vetoed in its entirety.

I appreciate the Legislature’s attempt to ensure that Kansans on Medicaid have information about all their long-term options before deciding to move into a nursing facility. However, there are already existing pathways for Kansans to receive individualized assistance through their managed care organization or one of Kansas’ Aging and Disability Resource Centers. Additionally, the existing screening process for individuals entering Medicaid-certified nursing facilities provides them with personalized information on various long-term care options. This proviso does not account for existing processes or provide sufficient guidance or resources to implement a similar screening process for other types of nursing facilities.

Department for Children and Families – No Bid Contract

Sec. 81(h) has been line-item vetoed in its entirety.

While I support providing services to prevent foster care placements, the funding in this proviso is exclusively for a single entity. The direct allocation of these funds circumvents the established competitive grant process that ensures transparency, accountability, and value for the state. Additionally, the Legislature is ordering the Department for Children and Families to accommodate this no-bid contract using an unidentified source of federal funds.

Department of Education – Legislative Overreach into State Assessment Scores

Sec. 87(f) has been line-item vetoed in its entirety.

The Kansas Constitution establishes a popularly elected State Board of Education for the purposes of supervising our public schools. While the Legislature may not like this reality, they must respect the role of the State Board of Education and its authority to handle educational issues as it sees fit. Directing how the Board is to administer state assessments and determine cut scores is clearly legislative overreach. These functions are best left to the Board where evidence, expertise, and best practices can dictate how we measure students’ success, rather than through budget provisos pushed by legislators.

I also have grave concerns for how these provisions of this proviso would be implemented—likely leading to mass confusion and unreliable data on student success, leading to devastating impacts for our students and public schools.

Department of Education – Legislative Mandates

Sec. 87(g) has been line-item vetoed in its entirety.

The portion of Sec. 88(a) that reads as follows has been line item vetoed:

Provided, That the above agency shall expend moneys in such account during fiscal year 2027 to provide for the KSDE innovative assessment pilot in accordance with the new authorities authorized pursuant to the agency's innovative assessment demonstration authority application to the United States department of education to establish, operate and evaluate an innovative assessment system, including for use in the statewide accountability system, with the goal of using the innovative assessment system after the demonstration authority ends to meet the academic assessment and statewide accountability system requirements under title I, part A of the elementary and secondary education act as amended by the every student succeeds act: Provided further, That the above agency shall conduct a pilot program for such innovative assessments in school year 2026-2027 that includes the following school districts: Dodge City, USD 443; Geary County, USD 475; Great Bend, USD 428; Olathe, USD 233; Humbolt, USD 258; and Kansas City, USD 500: And provided further, That expenditures shall be made by the above agency from such account to the following school districts in the following amounts: Dodge City, USD 443, \$108,526; Geary County, USD 475, \$110,108; Great Bend, USD 428, \$55,530; Olathe, USD 233, \$348,920; Humbolt, USD 258, \$32,051; and Kansas City, USD 500, \$287,275: And provided further, That it is the intent of the legislature that the pilot program shall expand to nine or more school districts in school year 2027-2028: And provided further, That the above agency shall establish a plan for continuous growth and uptake of the innovative assessments each year thereafter with the goal to achieve statewide operational administration for the math and English language arts innovative assessments: And provided further, That the above agency shall publish the results of the innovative assessments on a quarterly basis: And provided further, That such quarterly report shall include the results of the other statewide assessments alongside the innovative assessment results, and if there are no such results to publish from the other statewide assessments, a notation shall be made that there are no such results to publish.

Sec. 88 (1) has been line-item vetoed in its entirety.

If members of the Legislature want to dictate how the State Board of Education is to manage student assessments or set cut scores, they should run for the State Board. It is not the Legislature's role to require the State Board of Education to completely redesign how state assessments are created or provided to students. This is clear legislative interference in the constitutional authority of the State Board.

I am also concerned that these provisions will unduly harm our current process for designing and providing state assessments, which only harms our students, teachers, and public schools.

Department of Education – Interfering with State Assessments

Sec. 88(a) that reads as follows has been line-item vetoed:

Provided, however, That, of the amount appropriated to the above agency in such account, an amount of \$2,000,000 shall not be expended until the above agency demonstrates compliance with the following provisos: Provided further, That, notwithstanding the provisions of K.S.A. 72-5170, and amendments thereto, or any other statute, the above agency, in consultation with the state board of education, shall make expenditures from such account during fiscal year 2027 to report the results of the 2026 and 2027 state assessments for math and English language arts using the cut scores that were in effect prior to July 1, 2025: And provided further, That the above agency shall only publish and report such assessment results using the cut scores that were in effect prior to July 1, 2025, and shall not publish or report such results using the new cut scores approved by the state board of education in August of 2025 for school years 2025-2026 and 2026-2027: And provided further, That the above agency shall certify to the director of the budget and the director of accounts and reports that the above agency has complied with the foregoing provisos and shall transfer a copy of such certification to the director of legislative research and the house of representatives committees on appropriations and K-12 education budget and the senate committees on ways and means and education: And provided further, That, notwithstanding the provisions of K.S.A. 72-5170, and amendments thereto, or any other statute, the above agency, in coordination with the state board of education shall make expenditures from such account during fiscal year 2027 to terminate on September 30, 2026, the state assessment contract with the university of Kansas center for research, inc., for the Kansas assessment program for the 2026-2027 school year.

I do not condone the practice of legislative hostage-taking where critical funds for our public schools are held up until the State Board of Education adheres to the whims of a Legislature that continues to overstep its authority and tell the State Board of Education how to do the job it was elected to do. Again, the Legislature is playing a dangerous game of interfering with our current state assessment process—a game that could harm our students and their futures.

Department of Education – Forcing Use of Existing Resources for Enhancements

Sec. 88(k) has been line-item vetoed in its entirety.

While I support many of the programs included in this proviso, and even included some of them in my budget, it is improper to fund these programs in this manner. Rather than providing the funding for these programs outright, the Legislature has directed \$8.25 million in funds to be expended from existing resources, specifically anticipated excess finance formula funding that is not necessarily guaranteed. To bring more transparency and accountability for state funding, these programs should be funded through traditional means.

Department of Education – Restricting Freedom of Speech in Schools

Sec. 88(m) has been line-item vetoed in its entirety.

It is ironic that the Legislature has made a point to pass legislation attempting to protect the freedom of speech of students at Kansas public schools and universities this session while also slipping this proviso into the budget without a hearing or formal review of its implications. This proviso does the exact opposite of those bills—penalizing school districts and students if they choose to speak out about their beliefs during the school day.

I believe that our local school districts are properly equipped to handle these matters and work with their students and parents to ensure our public school environments are conducive to learning and preserving individual freedoms.

Kansas Historical Society – Junior Officers’ Quarters

Sec. 96(d) has been line-item vetoed in its entirety.

While this is a worthy project, I believe the cost of restoring the Junior Officers’ Quarters at Fort Dodge should not fall solely on the State. I encourage local stakeholders and the Historical Society to work together to find private or philanthropic funding to fund this work or match a potential state appropriation. Additionally, this appropriation was made with federal COVID-19 relief dollars which are bound by federally required timelines that this project is unlikely to meet.

Department of Transportation – No Bid Contract for Radio System Modernization

The portion of Sec. 140(a) that reads as follows has been line-item vetoed:

Provided, That, notwithstanding the provisions of any law to the contrary, expenditures shall be made from the above fund in an amount of not less than \$5,000,000 to support, modernize and sustain seamless integration for the existing Kansas statewide interoperable communication system (KSICS) used by local, state and federal agencies for radio communications: Provided further, That such expenditures to modernize the KSICS shall upgrade the radio base station and dispatch console equipment with associated engineering and integration services that continue operations of the existing KSICS without downtime, a break in operations or a full system replacement: And provided further, That such KSICS upgrade shall: (1) seamlessly integrate standards-based shared systems into the existing KSICS original equipment manufacturer, as recommended by level 5 of the department of homeland security's safecom program interoperability continuum; (2) include the existing state-owned system cores and locally-owned infrastructure assets on the existing KSICS system; (3) not modify or change the existing methods of interoperability between state, federal and local KSICS users or diminish or negatively change the radio system coverage of the existing KSICS; (4) not require learning new system management functionality or platforms for the continued operation of the existing KSICS; (5) maintain any existing technology integrations not

considered land-mobile radio that interface with the existing KSICS, including logging recorders, GPS mapping software, computer-aided dispatch, 911 systems, body-worn cameras; and (6) not require the use of gateways, bridges or ISSI/CSSI that deteriorate functionality, including cybersecurity, end-to-end voice encryption and interoperability of the existing KSICS and existing associated radio subscriber units, software and features, that have been procured by agencies within the state of Kansas, including state and local units of government: Provided, however, That moneys expended pursuant to this proviso shall not be used to supplant local government contributions in KSICS but shall be used to enable and leverage local, county and regional investments in KSICS related equipment and services: And provided further, That it is the intent of the legislature that such modernization program of the KSICS will continue to be appropriated in an amount equal to or greater than the amount appropriated for fiscal year 2027 through fiscal year 2031: And provided further, That, on or before January 11, 2027, the above agency shall submit a report to the office of the governor, the director of the budget, the house of representatives committee on appropriations and the senate committee on ways and means that details the expenditures made pursuant to this proviso, KSICS system condition and lifecycle status, progress toward long-term system sustainability and anticipated future funding needs to maintain reliable statewide interoperable public safety communications.

Sec. 140(k) has been line-item vetoed in its entirety.

These provisions are a no-bid contract for the Kansas Statewide Interoperable Communication System (KSICS) modernization project. KSICS is the radio system that state and local law enforcement rely on to facilitate radio communication. Modernizing the system will be a multi-year effort that could cost upwards of \$100 million in state funds. This initial \$5 million appropriation would cement the current provider for the system as the vendor for the modernization project and will lock the state into a multi-year, multi-million contract that has not been properly vetted.

Kansas communities deserve to get the best return on this investment possible. The vendor for this project should be identified through an open bidding process consistent with state procurement laws. No state agency requested this funding, as the agencies that administer KSICS are currently working to initiate a fair and transparent procurement process. I intend to give the next gubernatorial administration the opportunity to undertake that procurement process and make the final decision on the appropriate vendor for KSICS modernization.

State Finance Council – Lapsing Funding for Unfilled Positions

Sec. 153 has been line-item vetoed in its entirety.

The Legislature included similar language in last year's budget, and I did not veto it. However, we have not yet reached the end of the current fiscal year in which the first lapse of funding is to occur, so we do not yet know the full impact of that policy decision. Given the unknown impact that this policy will have on agencies, coupled with the additional budget cuts that many agencies have already had to endure, I think it is unwise to proclaim another funding lapse necessary at

this juncture. Since this lapse would not occur until the end of next fiscal year, the Legislature should review the impacts of the funding lapse implemented with last year's budget during the 2027 session, and partner with the next Governor to determine if a subsequent lapse is truly necessary, or if this will prove harmful to the delivery of public services.

State Finance Council – “Across the Board” Cut

Sec. 155 has been line-item vetoed in its entirety.

If the Legislature is going to mandate a 1.5 percent cut to state operations, that cut should also include the Legislative branch. While this is touted as an “across the board” cut, the Legislature has exempted itself from having to reduce its own spending. This decision was made despite the fact the Legislative budget has doubled in recent years. The Legislature also exempted their pet projects from this cut, meaning this funding reduction will directly impact the core services that Kansans rely on. If the Legislature wants to talk the talk of fiscal responsibility, it should also walk the walk.

School for the Deaf – Powerhouse Demolition

The portion of Sec. 163(a) that reads as follows has been line item vetoed:

Provided, however, That no expenditures shall be made by the above agency from the powerhouse demolition account until the superintendent of the Kansas state school for the deaf certifies to the director of accounts and reports that the joint committee on state building construction has recommended the capital improvement project to demolish a powerhouse structure on the campus of the Kansas state school for the deaf during the 2026 regular session of the legislature: Provided further, That when the superintendent provides certification to the director of accounts and reports under this section, the superintendent shall transmit a copy of such certification to the director of the budget and the director of legislative research.

The Joint Committee on State Building Construction has failed to meet since February 13, 2026, and has not considered the powerhouse demolition as required by this proviso. With only a few days left in the 2026 regular session and no scheduled meeting, it is unlikely that the School for the Deaf would be able to comply with this provision. The agency should not be penalized for the committee's continued inability to meet on this subject during the regular session, and, after a year of delays already, the demolition should be allowed to continue due to its critical need.

Kansas State Fair – Livestock Barn Upgrades

Sec. 181(a) has been line-item vetoed in its entirety.

I support continued improvements to the state fairgrounds, including the livestock barn. However, this project would rely on a 1:1 public-private funding match, and the State Fair has struggled to raise matching funds for similar capital improvement projects in recent years. As a result, we should not commit taxpayer funds to this project prematurely. I urge the Fair Board to

secure the required private match for previously approved projects first and then return with a request for funding for the livestock barn.

THE GOVERNOR'S OFFICE

BY THE GOVERNOR

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Laura Cell", written over a horizontal line.

April 8, 2026