

LEGISLATIVE REPORT

Economic Lifelines

Kansas Legislative Report

March 11, 2022

As the sports world prepares for March Madness, Topeka is preparing for its own version as the legislative calendar consists of critical deadlines for legislation in the process. Next week is the last week most committees will meet, providing an urgent environment to finish hearings and recommend bills out of committee. Most bills must be passed by the second chamber by March 24 while the last week of the month is reserved for conference committees to reconcile any differences between House and Senate versions.

The intense schedule of the next three weeks is interesting enough while many controversial issues are expected to come to a head before the April recess. There is not consensus on whether the state food sales tax rate should be eliminated completely or reduced to some degree, or the specific definition of food that should apply. Several proposed constitutional amendments, particularly on the Senate side, make headlines as one aims to alter the future of tax policy enactment while two others would change how state supreme court justices are appointed. Redistricting maps for state House, state Senate and State Board of Education districts are surfacing while House and Senate continue to piece their budget bill together.

This week Economic Lifelines created an opportunity to educate legislators about transportation infrastructure. A dinner was hosted by Economic Lifelines that saw 23 House and Senate freshmen gather and meet Secretary Julie Lorenz and EL Executive Committee members. KDOT Secretary Lorenz gave a presentation on the Eisenhower “IKE” Legacy Transportation Program, proving educational since freshman legislations were not elected when the IKE plan passed in the 2020 session. Legislator attendees noted they found the presentation informative.



KDOT Secretary Lorenz Presenting to House and Senate Freshmen

Department of Transportation Funding

The Senate Ways & Means Committee has recommended its budget bill (Substitute for SB 444), containing the Department of Transportation budget, to the full Senate. This recommendation suspends extraordinary transfers from the State Highway Fund. On the House side, the Committee on Appropriations Committee will work its budget bill next week, which has the same State Highway Fund recommendation.

Tax Policy Relevant to Transportation Funding

In the Senate Committee on Assessment and Taxation, Economic Lifelines presented opposition testimony for Senate Concurrent Resolution (SCR) 1620 noting its concern relates to existing revenue mechanisms for the State Highway Fund. SCR 1620 is a proposed constitutional amendment that would be placed on the November 2022 ballot that would require legislation enacting new taxes or increased tax rates be approved by a 2/3 majority of the Senate and House. Economic Lifelines' testimony noted the changing of the vehicle fleet over the next two decades may require different funding streams and could be difficult under the proposed amendment. SCR 1620 was approved by the committee and may be considered by the Senate later this month.

At this time, the House Committee on Taxation has not taken further action on food sales tax but this is scheduled for this coming Tuesday.

House and Senate Transportation Committees

Next week the Senate Committee on Transportation plans to resume its hearing on autonomous vehicle bill (SB 546) and hold hearings on five bills related to licensed plates. The House Committee on Transportation will receive an update from the Kansas Turnpike Authority and on a hearing on a bill pertaining to personal package delivery devices.