



KDHA

Kansas Legislative Update

January 10, 2019

The new year brings a new Legislature and Governor into office. The 2019 Legislative Session officially begins on Monday, January 14. The House and Senate will convene for the first time on Monday afternoon, with committees holding introductory meetings over the course of the week. Earlier in the morning, Governor-Elect Laura Kelly will be sworn into office as Kansas' 48th Governor. Inauguration activities include the inaugural ball Monday night and State of the State address on Wednesday night. The next week will be eventful and provide a better picture of how the legislative session may look over the next few months.

The administration transition is being watched very closely for insight into Governor-Elect Kelly's direction for the state. So far, only a portion of the cabinet secretaries have been announced, which includes Dr. Lee Norman as interim Secretary of the Kansas Department of Health and Environment, Roger Werholtz as interim secretary of the Department of Corrections, Laura Howard as interim secretary of the Department for Children and Families as well as for the Department for Aging and Disabilities Services, and Julie Lorenz for the Department of Transportation. Lorenz worked for KDOT Secretary Deb Miller when the last comprehensive transportation plan was assembled. Governor-Elect Kelly has announced she will retain Governor Colyer's Budget Director and Adjutant General. Staff members were announced this week and included a mix of seasoned statehouse legislative staffers and a few new faces.

The House and Senate are gearing up for a busy session. For the House, Speaker Ron Ryckman retains the highest office in the chamber but all other leadership roles are filled by new members. House Majority Leader Dan Hawkins, Speaker Pro Tem Blaine Finch and Minority Leader Tom Sawyer have all named their new staff members who will assist their efforts for the next two years. Two weeks ago, the Speaker announced committee chairs. There were a few changes made to compensate for the new House roster.

The Senate will look a bit different, considering the members did not stand for election last fall. All legislative leadership is the same as the previous four years. However, four new senators will be sworn into office to fill vacancies created last fall. In addition, two Republicans made national headlines when they changed their party affiliation to Democrat, now giving the 40-member chamber a composition of 29 Republicans, 10 Democrats and 1 Independent.

The first weeks of the session will illustrate the flavor of the session. Kansas now has a Democrat in the Governor's office with Republican super majorities in both legislative houses. It remains to be seen which policy pieces will be crafted for compromise and which may stall due to polarized limitations.

The health committees will look quite different. Senator Gene Sullentrop replaces Vicki Schmidt as chair of the Senate Public Health & Welfare Committee. Sullentrop was not previously a member of the committee. Senator Ed Berger ascends to the vice chair role while Senator Barbara Bollier, who

previously changes party affiliation from Republican to Democrat, moves from vice chair to the ranking minority member.

In the House, Brenda Landwehr becomes chair of the House Health Committee, after a six-year hiatus. Dr. John Eplee, a physician from Atchison, becomes the vice-chair, as Susan Concannon moves to become the chair of the Committee for Children & Seniors.

Thank you,

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