



2019 Legislative Policy Watch Weekly E-Update

Issue No. # 1, January 11, 2019

In This Issue

The Road Ahead

Ks. People's Agenda

CEP Livestreaming Interviews

Federal Farm Bill Update, Govt.
Shut down Impact

About Policy Watch

About Policy Watch E-Updates

The Legislative and Policy Watch Weekly E-Update is a project of the Kansas Rural Center.

Editor: Mary Fund
ksrc@rainbowtel.net

Paul Johnson, Policy Analyst
pjohnson@centurylink.net

Policy Watch Sponsors



The Kansas Rural Center promotes the health of the land and its people through research, education and advocacy that advance an ecologically sound, economically viable, and socially just agriculture. For more information about KRC go to www.kansasruralcenter.org.

Welcome to the first issue of 2019's Weekly Legislative Policy Watch! Updates will be issued at the end of each week the Kansas Legislature is in session from now to May or when they adjourn. Paul Johnson, KRC's policy analyst, will monitor food, farm, environmental and energy issues as well as state budget and revenue issues in collaboration with other organizations. We will provide notice of critical legislative hearings, and other related events or educational opportunities plus how to contact your legislators.

KRC will also offer updates and information on the federal farm bill, appropriations, and related federal issues.

*Mary Fund, Kansas Rural Center
mfund@kansasruralcenter.org*

The Road Ahead- Electoral Vision

by Paul Johnson

Elections really do matter. Kansans elected a new Governor - Laura Kelly - who has promised a political philosophy of moderation, a restoration of critical state services and a 'common sense' pragmatism to work in a bi-partisan manner to address key structural issues facing our state.

A somewhat more conservative Kansas House and the Kansas Senate will have to be constructive partners in facing the State's challenges. Progress will take time. A consensus of most lawmakers must be found. The national and state economy will have to cooperate to provide the necessary revenues to meet many of



**Kansas Natural
Resource Council**

The Kansas Natural Resource Council (KNRC)

promotes environmentally responsible practices and sustainable natural resource policies to ensure the quality and abundance of these resources for future generations. For more information about our organization and programs, or how to become a member, please visit knrc.weebly.com.



Kansas Farmers Union is the state's oldest active farm organization working to protect and enhance the economic interests & quality of life for family farmers, ranchers & rural communities. For more information go to: www.kansasfarmersunion.com.



League of Women Voters of Kansas is a grassroots volunteer political organization with nine local chapters across Kansas. For nearly 100 years, LWVK has encouraged the informed and active participation of citizens in government. For more information, contact lwvk.org.



Climate and Energy Project (CEP) is a Kansas-based non-partisan non-profit working to find practical solutions for a clean energy future. For More information go to: www.climateandenergy.org.



Friends of the Kaw (FOK)

these challenges. Priorities will have to be established and progress made in increments to reverse a decade of decline.

Governor Kelly was very clear in her stated priorities of resolving public school financing, expanding Medicaid for 150,000 uninsured Kansans, jumpstarting a stalled transportation plan, and fixing a broken child welfare system that has failed thousands of children. The revenue picture will be critical.

The Governor pledged no new taxes so continued economic recovery is vital. Good news came in November when official revenue forecasts increased income tax revenues by over \$300 million. Sales tax revenue is as important as income tax to the Kansas' State General Fund (SGF) and the forecast for sales tax growth is at best uncertain. With recent U.S Supreme Court decisions on taxing internet sales and allowing states to enter the realm of sports betting, there may be additional revenues to Kansas but it will take a couple of years to expedite these expanded revenue sources. The caution light is that the U.S. economy is in its longest economic expansion ever and recessions are a way of life for a market economy.

While the Governor has laid out certain priorities, it will be essential for legislative lawmakers working with the Governor's office to establish essential, substantive policy proposals for Kansas. As a co-equal branch of government, the Legislature should play its role in policy development and assist the public in focusing on certain issues.

HOUSING. This debate should begin with developing a Comprehensive Affordable Housing Strategy to promote economic development statewide and confront housing affordability for thousands of economically-challenged families in Kansas. Once the semi-

works to protect and preserve the Kansas River for present and future generations.

**Friends of Policy Watch:
Kansas Interfaith Action**

Stay Up-to-Date

For live audio streaming, information, calendars, schedules and Bills, go to:

<http://kslegislature.org/li/>

Find Your Legislator

Don't know your legislative district number?

Click [Here](#) to find your district and identify your legislator.

Contact Your Legislator

For Kansas House 2019 members click [HERE](#)

For Kansas Senate 2019 members click [HERE](#)

Contribute to KRC

private Kansas Housing Resources Corporation (KHRC) was separated from the Kansas Department of Commerce & Housing in 2003, KHRC has been out of sight and out of mind to most legislators.

KHRC does not present a complete annual report to legislative committees to assess progress with multi-family rental construction, weatherization funding and expenditures from the federal Community Development Block Grant. The statewide First Time Homebuyers Loan program - administered by Sedgwick and Shawnee Counties - has been non-existent for the last four years.

The Governor working with the Legislature should re-establish a Governor's Commission on Housing that reports on housing accomplishments and lists policy recommendations and place the First Time Homebuyers Loan program within KHRC.

HUNGER. Hunger does exist in the nation's breadbasket. According to an Issue Brief from the Kansas Health Institute in 2015, one in six Kansas households were food insecure in 2013 (with 1 in 5 households with children food insecure, and 1 in 3 households of single women with children food insecure). Kansas ranked 44th of the 50 states in that 31% of those eligible for food stamps (SNAP) did not access them. Kansas ranked 50th for the percent of low-income children served by the Summer Food Service Program. Food stamps or SNAP accounted for 70% of all public or private food assistance in Kansas in 2013.

From 2013 to 2018, SNAP assistance has declined from \$471 million to \$299 million with 41,000 children and 62,000 adults losing benefits. The Department of Children and Families must be adequately staffed to assure participation and access to SNAP.

**To contribute to
weekly
Policy Watch
Updates
and to KRC -
[Click Here.](#)**

Contact Information

Sen. Jerry Moran
DC Ofc 202-224-6521

Sen. Pat Roberts
DC Ofc 202-224-4774

Rep. Roger Marshall,
1st Dist.
DC Ofc: 202-225-2715

Rep. Steve Watkins
2nd Dist.
DC Ofc: 202-225-6601

Rep. Sharice Davids
3rd Dist.
DC Ofc: 202-225-2865

Rep. Ron Estes
4th Dist.
DC Ofc.: 202-225-6216

ENERGY & ENERGY EFFICIENCY. Kansas continues to falter in researching the opportunities of energy efficiency and providing energy conservation programs. According to the American Council for an Energy Efficient Economy (ACEEE), Kansas ranks just 45th of the 50 states in having utility-based or governmental conservation programs. Kansas is one of just six states that have not developed a statewide energy plan.

The Kansas Corporation Commission (KCC) has not fully researched the potential for energy efficiency investments compared to expanding power production. By law, public utilities are required to 'furnish reasonably efficient and sufficient service and facilities' to obtain their monopoly 'service area' status. This law passed in 1933 so it needs to be updated to the 21st century since energy efficiency investments are far less costly than power production today, and the KCC is mandated to develop a statewide energy plan.

FOOD. Local food production deserves much greater discussion. Kansas imports 95% of the fruits and vegetables (\$770 million) consumed in the state. Kansas has a diminishing number of small state inspected meat plants left that might process 10% of the meat consumed in Kansas. Kansas has no commercial-sized poultry plant to process live chickens. Kansas has an emerging local and regional food system sector of both vegetables and fruit as well as meat and poultry needing to be served.

Kansas has a Beginning Farmer Loan Program (hidden away at the Kansas Development Finance Authority) that makes \$4-6 million in loans yearly, but could be expanded significantly if properly promoted.

In energy, Kansas established a 20% goal of electrical power by 2020 from renewable energy. The 20% goal was met in 2016 and 35% produced renewably last year. Kansas should consider setting local food production goals to keep our food dollars reverberating locally and promoting healthier diets that would result in lower medical costs.

Also, the State Legislature's Local Food and Farm Task Force provided two reports (2015 and 2016) with recommendations for ways the state could enhance local and regional food production and economic opportunities. These reports built on the KRC and partners' "Feeding Kansas" report of 2014. Progress at the state level was hampered by the state's economic woes, while people around the state are moving forward as best they can. Now it is time to look at all of those again and reaffirm how the state can help accomplish those recommendations and goals to build a local/regional food economy. Informational hearings on the state of the Local/Regional Food Opportunities would be a good start.

FEDERAL FARM BILL. The federal farm bill programs provide a large amount of money to Kansas farmers and agriculture in general. Congress just passed and the president signed the 2018 Farm Bill just before the holidays, and now completing the appropriations process is underway although it is being held hostage like lots of other Congressional issues to the impasse over a border wall. But the Kansas Legislature should be better informed on how this important federal legislation impacts the state and should hold informational hearings on the programs and how they impact Kansas.

START OF THE SESSION AND THE INAUGURATION. The 2019 Kansas Legislative session begins on January 14. Until then, the Governor is assembling her budget and

interviewing applicants for key positions throughout government. Kansas legislative leaders have named committee chairpersons and selected legislators for the committees in the House and Senate as there are 31 new House members plus 4 new Senators and seniority is re-determined with this turnover.

There is now a new 'Rural Revitalization' committee in the House and the House Water & Environment committee has been terminated. There are no Senate or House bills carried over from 2018 and so far there have been five bills pre-filed in the Senate and nine bills pre-filed in the House. These bills can be tracked on the Kansas Legislature's website at <http://kslegislature.org/li/>

Inaugural activities will start on January 13 and the inauguration itself on Monday January 14 at 11 am on the south steps of the Capitol. The Governor will give her first State of the State address on Wednesday January 16 broadcast at 6:30 pm. Her first budget will be available by at least February 3 at <budget.kansas.gov> .

The last two weeks in January will be very slow and an ideal time for committees to hold informational hearings on the recently passed Farm Bill, the basics of a State Energy Plan, and the status of hunger in Kansas. The House and Senate leaders from both parties should present their legislative priority list in those first few weeks. The tone will then be set on areas of cooperation and the budgetary battles to come.

*Contact Paul Johnson at
pdjohnson@centurylink.net*

**Kansas People's Agenda Rally and Citizen Lobbying Training
Scheduled for Tuesday, January 15**

**THE PEOPLE'S STATE OF THE STATE
JANUARY 15TH 2019**

**KANSAS STATEHOUSE
TOPEKA, KANSAS
9:30AM - 11:00AM LOBBY TRAINING
11:30AM - 1:00PM RALLY
1:00PM VISIT LEGISLATORS**

Kansans from all over the state will gather in the State Capitol, 2d Floor Rotunda on Tuesday, January 15, from 11:30-1:00 for the Third Annual Kansas People's Agenda "People's State of the State" rally and press conference. The theme of this year's rally is calling attention to bills that are overdue.

The event will feature speakers on a wide variety of issues facing Kansas this year, including voting rights, education, gun violence, racism and immigration, economic justice and gender equality, child protections, health care access, and disability rights. There will also be musicians and spoken-word performances. The speakers are people who are directly affected by the actions (or inactions) of previous state government.

From 9:30-11:00, a citizen lobbying training will be held in the Visitors' Center Auditorium with information from key organizations on the legislative concerns of this year and training for people who may have never visited with a legislator before. During the day, Kansans are encouraged to visit their legislators' offices and share their concerns and experiences with these issues in Kansas--the bills that are overdue.

Kansas People's Agenda is a coalition designed to engage all Kansans in advocacy and citizen engagement, with the belief that government works best when engagement, transparency and accountability are core values and all people enter the capital knowing that it is indeed "the people's house." See their website at <https://kansaspeoplesagenda.org/>

"Government for the people, of the people, and by the people means the people have to show up. I am excited to be the emcee of the Kansas Peoples Agenda to help all Kansans address their grievances with their government and let our legislators know what the people want for our state moving forward. We must be louder than the lobbyists to drown out the special interests constantly chirping in their ears. The Peoples voices will echo through the capitol on January 15th and remind our state government for whom they work!" Stated Val Yelton Baul

Mariel Ferreiro is a community organizer in Lawrence, and immigration activist, and one of the founders of the statewide Kansas Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights. "Through real grassroots organizing,

reconciling with our part in the destruction of marginalized communities, and lifting up those most disenfranchised, we can create a better Kansas."

Overdue Bills: The legislative body of the State of Kansas owes its citizens a re-investment of money and energy into the aspects of government that allow us to thrive and grow. These include wisely investing in education, healthcare, infrastructure and systems, families, and vulnerable and marginalized groups within our state. Citizens of Kansas call upon government to act on behalf of its people rather than starving programs and systems from being able to function and serve properly.

More than 17 organizations will be tabling during the day.

Contact Sarah Oglesby-Dunegan at 720-339-6779.

Kansas WEALTH Policy, Civic Engagement and YOU

Curious about what's going on in the Kansas legislature this year and how you can make a difference? Tune in to the Climate + Energy Project's CEP LIVE on Facebook every week for the latest!

Throughout the 2019 Kansas legislative session, CEP will host live interviews with organizations whose mission includes one of the WEALTH topic areas: Water, Energy, Air, Land, Transportation, and Health. Leading advocacy organizations will provide updates on current WEALTH policy priorities, offer tips for civic engagement in Kansas, and answer all of your pressing questions!

On Tuesday, January 15th at 2PM CST we'll kick off the series with Dorothy Barnett, executive director of the Climate and Energy Project, talking with Jessica Lucas of the Clean Energy Business Council. Click on the link to find Clean Energy Business Council online and on Facebook at @CleanEnergy4BizClean.

If you miss it, check back on the Facebook event page for a link to the recording.

Date	Guest(s)	Organization	Topic
1/15	Jessica Lucas	Clean Energy Business Council cleanenergyforbusiness.com	Energy
1/22	Cille King & Teresa Briggs	League of Women Voters lwvk.org	Voter Engagement
1/29	Moti Rieber	Kansas Interfaith Action kansasinterfaithaction.org	Social Justice & Health
2/5	Zack Pistora	Kansas Sierra Club	Environment

	kansas.sierraclub.org	
2/12 Mary Fund	Kansas Rural Center kansasruralcenter.org	Agriculture
2/19 Shaun Rojas	Kansas Leadership Center kansasleadershipcenter.org	Civic Engagement
2/26 Christie Appelhanz	Children's Alliance of Kansas childally.org	Health & Children
3/5 Dawn Buehler	Friends of the Kaw kansasriver.org	Water
3/12 WEALTH DAY		

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

WEALTH DAY MARCH 12, 2019
STATE CAPITOL
Stay tuned for details.

FEDERAL FARM BILL UPDATE

Farm Bill Passed, Ag Appropriations Hostage to Govt. Shutdown

The long awaited 2018 Farm Bill was finally passed in the very last possible days before the holidays, and signed by the President on December 20. This followed two years of intense debate and several weeks of limbo as final negotiations took place largely behind closed doors. The bill included both victories and disappointments for the sustainable agriculture community, and there is plenty to work on as implementation, rulemaking, administrative reform are all just as important now that the legislation has been completed.

The major next step is passing agricultural appropriations bills. Just hours after the 116th Congress was sworn into office in early January, the U.S. House voted and passed two bills to end the government partial shutdown that went into effect in late December. One bill included six of the seven remaining appropriations bills and included the Agricultural Appropriations package. Unfortunately, these appropriations are being held hostage to the continuing government shut down due to the impasse over a border wall-just as thousands of government workers are going without pay, and services are curtailed across the country.

Those impacted services include USDA FSA offices, which offer loans to farmers (and this is a particularly sensitive time of year for 2019 operating

loans), and rural development programs serving housing and community facility loans. The longer the shutdown, the more broad the impact. For instance, the federal nutrition program SNAP, formerly food stamps, has funds to operate until the end of February, but will leave thousands of low income families, women and children who depend on that program, hungry, if the shutdown continues indefinitely.

As for Agricultural appropriations, NSAC issued this today:

From NSAC Jan. 11, 2019: On Thursday, January 10, the House passed their fiscal year 2019 (FY) Agriculture Appropriations bill on the floor as a standalone bill. This was the same bill that was included as part of a package of six bills, which was passed by the House (though not taken up by the Senate) last week and detailed in the post below. Both iterations of the FY 2019 Agriculture Appropriations were nearly identical to the version the Senate passed at the end of 2018; which included several important funding increases for sustainable agriculture. At this point, there has been no progress on negotiations to end the shutdown and reopen the government. The House will send their standalone agriculture spending bill to the Senate, though Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) has held firm to his promise not to take up any spending bills without guaranteed funding for the President's border wall or a signal of approval from the White House. NSAC will continue to provide updates as negotiations move forward, and will report on any developments on FY 2019 sustainable agriculture funding priorities.

Farm Bill Summary:

Below are links to the blog series published by the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (NSAC) on program details of Farm Bill highlights, lowlights and mixed bag results. But first we offer a shorter summary of major wins and losses:

Local/ Regional Food Programs:

-Creates the Local Agriculture Market Program (LAMP) and provide \$50 million/year in mandatory permanent funds. LAMP combines the old Farmers Market and Local Food Promotion Program and Value Added Producer grant programs.

- Instructs USDA to allow farmers' markets to operate individual Electronic benefits transfer device for accepting SNAP benefits at more than one location.

- Creates a new "Urban, Indoor and Other Emerging Agricultural Production, Research and Education Extension Initiative" and creates a new Urban Agriculture research, education and extension initiative competitive grants program. It also instructs USDA to create a new "Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Forms of Production" office.

-Reauthorizes the National Sustainable Agriculture Information Service/Appropriate Technology Transfer for Rural America (ATTRA).

Conservation:

-Protects funding levels for the Conservation Title as a whole, but long term funding for working lands programs will see significant cuts in later years of the bill. While the bill retains a relatively equal balance between EQIP and CSP funding from 2019-2013, the bill significantly redistributes funding from CSP to EQIP in the following 5 years of the bill, thus reducing overall working lands conservation funding in the future.

-Decreases the livestock set-aside within EQIP from 60 to 50 percent but does not include any reforms to limit funding to new and expanding concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFO's).

Organic Agriculture:

Establishes permanent mandatory funding for the Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative (OREI), ramping up funding to \$50 million/year by 2023. (For 2019 and 2020 levels will remain at current \$20 million.)

Reauthorizes and continues mandatory funding for the National Organic Certification cost-share program, which supports transition to and growth of organic production, but also cuts the amount of annual funding.

Beginning Farmers:

Provides mandatory, permanent funding for the Farming Opportunities Training and Outreach Program (FOTO). This program combines two training and assistance programs- Beginning Farmer Rancher Development Program and the Outreach and Assistance to Socially Disadvantaged and Veteran Farmers and Ranchers Program.

Commodity Crop and Crop Insurance:

-Improves whole farm revenue protection insurance, a risk management insurance for diversified farms who have been struggling with coverage issues.

- Adds a Local Food Policy to the list of new policies the Risk Management Agency should develop, for smaller specialty crop producers.

- Includes a strong step forward toward ending discrimination against farmers who adopt cover cropping. Not quite enough, but it does make progress toward convincing RMA to include all conservation practices as good farming practices for crop insurance purposes.

- And unfortunately includes a major new payment limit loophole to provide the largest commodity farms in the country with a way to avoid the statutory limit of \$250,000 a year on commodity subsidies. New law allows extended family members are now eligible for payments.

For all the details and links to further explanations, please see the six part series published by NSAC in December on the farm bill drill down:

<http://sustainableagriculture.net/blog/2018-farm-bill-commodity-subsidies-crop-insurance/>

<http://sustainableagriculture.net/blog/2018-farm-bill-drilldown-research/>

<http://sustainableagriculture.net/blog/2018-farm-bill-drilldown-conservation/>

<http://sustainableagriculture.net/blog/2018-farm-bill-drilldown-local-rural/>

<http://sustainableagriculture.net/blog/2018-farm-bill-drilldown-beginning-farmers/>

<http://sustainableagriculture.net/blog/2018-farm-bill-drilldown-organic-ag/>

About Policy Watch and Sponsors

Contributors to KRC are automatically on the Policy Watch list, if they provide an e-mail address; or you can subscribe just for the Updates for \$25. KRC will send complimentary copies to non-contributors for several issues upon request. To get information on how to support Policy Watch, click [HERE!](#)

In 2019, KRC is partnering with the Kansas Natural Resource Council (KNRC), Kansas Farmers Union (KFU), League of Women Voters of Kansas (LWVK), Climate and Energy Policy (CEP), and Friends of the KAW to send Policy Watch to their members. We thank them for their support.

To opt out of receiving Policy Watch as a member of one of these organizations, see the following:

If a member of KNRC, contact Joanna Voigt at jvoigt@kansasruralcenter.org.

If a member of KFU, contact Mercedes Taylor-Puckett at kfu.mercedes@gmail.com.

If a member LWVK, contact lww.kansas@gmail.com.

If you are on KRC's mailing list, and would like to opt out of receiving KRC Weekly Updates, please contact Joanna Voigt at jvoigt@kansasruralcenter.org.

The Kansas Rural Center
4021 SW 10th Ave. #337
Topeka, Kansas 66604
866-579-5469
www.kansasruralcenter.org

If you have any questions about Policy Watch, contact Mary Fund, editor at mfund@kansasruralcenter.org, or contact Paul Johnson at pdjohnson@centurylink.net.

To learn more about the Kansas Rural Center, please visit our website at www.kansasruralcenter.org.

