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LEGISLATIVE REPORT

KEDA

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OVERVIEW

The 2022 Kansas Legislative Session officially begins on Monday, January 10. The new session promises to see plenty of action, tackling several contentious issues in a year where House members, the Governor and statewide officials stand for re-election.

Through the 2021 session, the Legislature was able to convene amid the pandemic largely uninterrupted. Live streaming of committees and floor session provided more access and transparency to legislative action, which will remain in place in 2022. It did appear larger gatherings, including coordinated legislative visits, would return providing a more normal setting, but with an increase of COVID cases, that remains to be seen.

The Governor will give her State of the State address on Tuesday, January 11. This will outline her priorities and budget items. The proposed budget will be available on Wednesday, January 12.

Traditionally the approval of a budget is the only required action for a legislative session but 2022 adds the task of drawing and approving redistricting maps. Required every ten years to ensure state House, Senate and congressional districts are roughly the same population, Kansas continues to face population shifts from rural to urban areas. This generally results in rural districts growing larger and urban districts smaller, with a handful of districts shifted to the metro areas to account for the population growth. Often contentious for states which draw their own maps, Kansas legislators hope to approve the new maps before session adjourns in May to avoid federal court as seen in 2012. Both chambers have created their own committees to draw and propose maps but this will remain a focal point of the session while other policy issues are discussed. The 2022 primary and general elections will be based on the new maps.

Unlike most sessions of recent memory, the Legislature will not begin the year facing a major budget shortfall. Revenue estimates continue to arrive better than expected, padding a healthy ending balance. While this generally creates opportunities for advocates to create new programs, both Republicans and Democrats have publicly suggested reducing food sales tax is in play for 2022. Governor Kelly has recommended elimination of the foods sales tax, which has a \$450 million price tag. Along with the food sales tax elimination, Governor Kelly is recommending a one time \$250 tax rebate to all Kansas residents who filed a tax return in the 2021 calendar year.

Look for more legislative ideas as it relates to vaccinate mandates and exemptions too, including liability issues that will sunset March 31, 2022. And, expect a session that looks at workforce and housing issues that have become a concern to businesses in Kansas.

The 2021 interim session was the busiest in recent memory, hosting dozens of interim committees meeting throughout the autumn months. Given the interest in numerous policy areas and the fact that most 2021 legislation will become active again on January 10, it is safe to prepare for a busy 2022 session.

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