

NEWSLETTERS



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FIRST ADJOURNMENT

On Friday, the Legislature adjourned for three weeks after addressing a number of issues carried over from the shortened 2020 session, including COVID-related legislation and budget issues. Unfortunately, some major issues remain to be addressed in the upcoming veto session.

The 20 Yea, 20 Nay Senate deadlock on the 2021 base education budget pushed school funding to the veto session. The absence of the 20-mill statewide property tax in SB 175 (education budget) and the provisions providing scholarships for private schools entitled the “The Student Empower Act” were contributing factors to the deadlock.

Nevertheless, the Legislature should get high grades for addressing so many issues in the regular session. Solons responded to the pandemic’s economic impact on Kansas, the judicial system, and the tax system. Also, in response to soaring energy bills from a bitterly cold February, the Legislature creatively provided low-interest loans to ease the financial impact. Modernization of the Kansas unemployment system also stands out as a success.

WHAT TO WATCH NEXT

There are four matters to monitor before the May 3 veto session begins. The first is the use of Gov. Kelly’s veto pen and which bills she may veto. The second is the Consensus Revenue Estimating Group meeting on April 20. It will provide insights into how quickly economic experts believe the Kansas economy is recovering. The new revenue estimates will be used to help develop the Omnibus Budget bill. The third is how much progress the House Appropriations Committee and Senate Ways and Means Committee have made between April 26 and 27, as they use the revenue projections to assemble the Omnibus budget. Work on the budget will be complicated, because school funding remains unresolved. Another critical factor is whether the budget committee receives clarification from the federal government on how unspent federal COVID-relief funds may be used to finance other programs, not necessarily related to COVID. Finally, one of the distractions emerging late in the session was the arrest of

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Senate Majority Leader Gene Suellentrop. After the Senate adjourned on Friday, the Senate Republican caucus voted to remove Sen. Suellentrop from his position as majority leader. The timing and politics of selecting Sen. Suellentrop's successor adds drama to the veto session. Some Senators are exploring their prospects for taking the position of Leader, and some are quietly campaigning.

Kansas Legislative Insights is a publication developed by the Governmental Relations & Public Policy Law practice group of Foulston Siefkin LLP. It is designed to inform business executives, human resources and governmental relations professionals, and general counsel about current developments occurring in current Kansas legislation. Published regularly during the Kansas legislative session, it focuses on issues involving healthcare, insurance, public finance, taxation, financial institutions, business & economic development, energy, real estate & construction, environmental, agribusiness, employment, and workers compensation. Bill summaries are by necessity brief, however, for additional information on any issue before the Kansas Legislature, contact Foulston Siefkin's Governmental Relations & Public Policy Law practice group leader, James P. Rankin at 785.233.3600 or jrankin@foulston.com. Learn more about the authors below:

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As a partner at Foulston Siefkin, Eddie represents clients in matters before state regulatory commissions, courts, and local governmental bodies. He has built and maintained relationships with key individuals – including lobbyists, elected and appointed officials, and staff members – that prove valuable in advancing clients' interests and issues. Drawing on his experience as a regional governmental affairs attorney for AT&T in Chicago, he helps clients navigate the maze of federal policies and agencies, advises on how processes work in Washington, and provides introductions to those who can help them accomplish their goals.

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