

THE PECK PERSPECTIVE

(From the Capitol)

March 31, 2025

The week of March 24th saw the legislature vote on a wide array of bills and conclude the regular portion of the 2025 session – much earlier than most years. Some of the issues addressed include tax reductions, protecting voting rights, helping pregnant women, cracking down on crime, preventing America’s enemies from owning Kansas land and passing a budget. We’ll return to Topeka April 10th for a three-day “veto session”.

Space doesn’t allow me to write about every issue, but over the next several weeks I will cover as many as possible. If there is a particular bill or issue of special interest to you, please reach out to me.

Some of the bills that were passed, in the form of a conference committee report, which, frustrating to me, makes it difficult for Kansans to follow a particular issue, are unquestionably good for Kansans, while I’m not convinced others will prove their worth. Only time will reveal just how successful the session was.

Another Veto Override (SB 4): This is a simple bill I’ve previously written about that requires all ballots to be turned in by 7:00 p.m. on Election Day. SB 4 was given to the Governor on March 14th, she vetoed it on March 24th and the Legislature overrode the veto on March 25th. With the successful override, by a vote of 30–10 in the Senate (I voted yes) and 84–41 in the House, the change will be effective with the 2026 elections.

Property Tax Relief (SB 35): Although I didn’t introduce SB 35, I have previously introduced similar legislation. Therefore, I am very pleased with the passage of this long-overdue property tax relief. SB 35 is not a major property tax cut, but it is a step toward removing the State from the property tax business. The bill eliminates the 1.5 statewide mill levy that is designated for state educational buildings and state institution buildings. For those concerned about funding for the Educational Building Fund (EBF) and the State Institutions Building Fund (SIBF), both will continue receiving the same amount, only from the State General Fund – \$56 million to the EBF and \$25 million to the SIBF. Both dollar amounts will automatically be adjusted upward in future years. The only negative to SB 35 is it doesn’t take effect until 2026. SB 35 passed the Senate 40–0, and the House 96–26.

Lowering State Income Taxes (SB 269): When the Kansas economy grows, creating more tax revenue for the state, the money should go toward lowering taxes, not grow government. With the passage of SB 269, as tax receipts exceed the FY 2024 amount, adjusted for inflation, state income tax rates will go down.

In 2024, individual income tax rates in Kansas were lowered, simplified and reduced to two tax brackets, 5.2% and 5.58%. Under SB 269, as state revenues grow, both tax rates will gradually reduce proportionally. Although expected to take many years, both brackets will eventually be reduced to 4.0%. After the individual income rates reach 4.0%, the corporate and financial institutions rates will begin going down until the corporate rate settles at 4.0% and the rate for financial institutions is 2.6%.

This fiscally responsible income tax reduction bill is necessary for Kansas to be competitive with other pro-growth states. Studies have shown that states with low, single rates perform better economically than states with income tax systems like we currently have in Kansas. SB 269 passed the Senate 30–10, I voted yes, and the House 84–38. Some think Governor Kelly will veto the tax cut. However, the vote count says a veto override is likely.

Only Americans Should Vote (HCR 5004): Most Americans believe that only citizens should vote in our elections. However, there are jurisdictions around the country that have discussed allowing non-citizens, including illegal aliens, to vote. To ensure this doesn't happen in Kansas, the legislature adopted HCR 5004, which if approved by voters, would amend Section 1 of Article 5 of the Kansas Constitution to clarify that no person shall be deemed a qualified elector unless such person is a citizen of the United States, has attained the age of 18, and resides in the voting area in which such person seeks to vote. HCR 5004 passed with bipartisan super majorities. The Senate vote was 37–3 and the House 90–28. Therefore, in November 2026, Kansans will have the opportunity to determine if only Americans can vote in Kansas elections.

Until next time, may the blessings of God be yours.

Virgil Peck
State Senator