

THE PECK PERSPECTIVE

(From the Capitol)

February 3, 2025

The third week of the 2025 session saw the pace of activity kick into high gear. At the close of the week, there had been a total of 148 bills and concurrent resolutions introduced in the Senate and another 209 in the House. Historically, each session will see around 750 bills and concurrent resolutions put into play, with only about 200 becoming law.

Not only is legislation being written and introduced, but groups are holding rallies in Topeka. Last week, well over 1,000 parents and children were in the State Capitol making their voice heard for education reform that would maximize the opportunity for every student to succeed through school choice. As legislators, it's important to focus on what's best for students, and a growing number of Kansans see school choice as a good way of providing both great public schools and giving parents more flexibility when determining the best educational opportunity for their children. Tennessee recently joined the parade of states embracing educational freedom.

Another rally last week was the annual March for Life Rally. This year's rally was by far the largest I've witnessed in my 17 sessions as a legislator. The weather was great, and the south ground of the Capitol complex saw hundreds of adults and students (I estimate 700 to 800) assembled to call for renewed respect, love and protection for vulnerable human lives. The event highlighted the pro-life legislative successes of the past two years, acknowledged the work ahead, and mourned the 19,467 lives snuffed out in Kansas by the abortion industry in 2023 – up from 12,318 abortions in 2022 and 7,849 in 2021.

Senate Passes Tax Cuts: The first two bills voted on by the Senate in 2025 are designed to reduce property taxes. I wrote about the bills, SB 10 and SB 35, last week. SB 10 exempts watercraft, small trailers, motorized bicycles and wheelchairs, and other equipment not manufactured for highway use from property or ad valorem taxes. SB 35 eliminates the 1.5 mills levied by the State to fund maintenance and renovations of government buildings.

SB 10 passed the Senate by a vote of 37–3 while SB 35 passed 38–2. If signed into law, both bills will provide much-needed property tax relief for Kansans. From 1997 through 2023, the last year numbers are available, taxes on residential properties in Kansas increased by 342%. Over the same 27-year period the rate of inflation was 80%.

Help Reduce Kansas Government: The newly created Committee on Government Efficiency (COGE) in the Senate has launched a Government Efficiency Portal on the Legislature's website to receive input from the public. The portal includes a simple form that can be accessed at: <https://kslegislature.gov/li/kansascoge>. Efficiency suggestions can also be emailed to: kansascoge@senate.ks.gov.

Senate President Ty Masterson, who created the COGE, said one reason he did so was to *"receive ideas directly from Kansans on how government can operate more efficiently and effectively. This easy-to-access portal allows the public to submit ideas that the committee can then study and potentially turn into legislation"*. The COGE chair, Senator Renee Erickson, invites Kansans to not be shy, but to submit their ideas. Erickson said, *"Our committee is eager to receive ideas from the people on how to ensure government is truly on their side. The best ideas often come from citizens, not politicians!"*

Protecting Minors: In 2024, the Kansas Legislature passed legislation similar to what several other states passed that would protect minors – who think it's a good idea to try and change their gender – from permanent, life-altering surgeries and treatments. However, as widely reported, Governor Kelly vetoed the legislation, and the House failed to override the veto.

Last week, by a bi-partisan supermajority vote of 32-8, the Kansas Senate passed SB 63, the *Help Not Harm Act*. Soon thereafter, the House passed SB 63 by a vote of 83–35, sending it to the Governor's desk.

It's truly sad that some adults in Kansas (and the U.S.) don't care enough about gender-confused children to tell them the truth about life and the harmful and irreversible effects of puberty blockers, cross-sex hormones, and transgender surgery. It's been proven multiple times that such treatments carry severe, lifelong consequences and can result in infertility, weakened bones, stunted growth and an increased risk of stroke and heart disease. Therefore, the Legislature took proactive steps to "Help Not Harm" vulnerable, immature children by passing SB 63.

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

Virgil Peck
State Senator