

THE PECK PERSPECTIVE

(From the Capitol)

March 9, 2026

Extending Grace: Last week, as a good-faith effort to allow time for those who need to make the required gender marker correction on their driver's license or birth certificate, Kansas Attorney General Kris Kobach asked state officials to discontinue invalidating driver's license until March 26th. Although the new law (SB 244) does not require a grace period, it's reasonable to allow some time for those affected to comply with the law that requires documents to reflect their God-given biological sex.

Kobach also said he would wait until March 26th before enforcing another provision in SB 244 that bars people who say they've changed their gender from entering restrooms and locker rooms in government buildings that differ from their biological sex.

Prior to the announcement by General Kobach, the Department of Revenue notified Kansans who had changed their gender marker that starting Feb. 26 – when the law took effect – their driver's license and state-issued ID cards were immediately invalidated.

A Step Toward Passing a State Budget (SB 315): On Wednesday, March 4th, the Senate narrowly passed a bill, SB 315, that takes a step toward establishing the state budget. SB 315 received the minimum number of yes votes and passed 21–19. I voted no.

I understand the importance of funding core functions of government – law enforcement, infrastructure (roads & bridges), social services (helping the disabled & needy), education, etc. – but I also understand that taxes are too high and government spends too much money. Although there are provisions in SB 315 I like (including some I put in), and we added language to help root out fraud waste and abuse, I couldn't in good conscience vote for a budget that spends \$620 million more in FY '26 as compared to FY '25.

To drive the point home (I'll try not to bog you down with too many numbers), the state budget in FY '22, five years ago, was \$8.2 billion. In FY '23 spending was up by \$527 million to \$8.73 billion. The next three fiscal years saw increases of \$630 million, \$950 million and \$620 million respectively. To sum it up, state spending over the past five years has risen by \$2.7 billion – an average annual increase of \$5.4 million. That level of government spending of taxpayer dollars is unsustainable and hinders any effort for true tax reform.

Calling for Term Limits (HCR 5022): As a long-time supporter of term limits at all levels of government, I was pleased when the Senate had the opportunity to join the House in calling for a convention of the states to establish term limits for members of congress. You may recall that earlier this session the Legislature passed SCR 1604 calling for a Convention of States that included term limits among its three planks — the other two were imposing fiscal restraints on the federal government (balanced budget) and limiting the power and jurisdiction of the federal government. HCR 5022, in contrast, is narrowly tailored on just the term limits issue. The Senate vote was 30-8 and in the House 78-42.

Banning a Harmful Drug (SB 497): By a vote of 33-5 the Senate passed legislation, SB 497, that adds kratom, a dangerous opioid that can be more potent than morphine, to schedule 1 of the uniform controlled substances act. The legislation was passed to address the growing health crisis of kratom, particularly the synthetic version 7-0H, and its widespread availability to the public (including children) at places like gas stations and convenience stores.

Kratom is from a tropical tree native to Southeast Asia. Consumption of its leaves produces both stimulant effects (in low doses) and sedative effects (in high doses), and can lead to psychotic symptoms, and psychological and physiological dependence. The FDA recognizes that there is much that is not known scientifically about kratom, but they have issued warnings to consumers not to use kratom because of the risk of serious adverse events, including liver toxicity, seizures, and substance use disorder. In rare cases, deaths have been associated with kratom use. I believe it is important that the legislature take proactive steps to prevent another wave of the opioid epidemic.

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

Virgil Peck
State Senator