

THE PECK PERSPECTIVE

(From the Capitol)

March 3, 2026

Tackling Property Tax Reform (SCR 1616): Although assessed entirely at the local level (county, city, schools, etc.) property taxes have long been the number one issue Kansas voters ask legislators to address. The Senate and House are both working on property tax relief, hitting it from different angles.

For the second time in two years the Senate has passed legislation that will allow Kansans to determine if they wish to put language into the State Constitution that will provide transparency and certainty when local taxing authorities consider the level of property taxes they will levy.

On a bipartisan vote of 30-10, the Senate passed SCR 1616. If the House adopts the resolution, Kansas voters will be given the opportunity to decide whether to cap annual assessment increases at 3% or maintain the status quo. Passage of the proposed amendment would lock in the cap so future politicians couldn't simply vote to undo it. It would also stop homeowners from getting slammed with huge tax bills simply because appraisers jacked up the numbers. Additionally, it would promote transparency by requiring local officials to raise the mill levy if they want to raise revenues beyond the cap—rather than hiding behind the assessment increases.

The House passed a statutory –rather than constitutional– proposal to restrict local governments from increasing spending above a 3% cap and allow protest petitions to block higher taxes. The bill, HB 2745, is a structural reform, aimed at addressing the root cause of rising property taxes by placing responsible limits on local spending and strengthening taxpayer protections. HB 2745 forces accountability and restores balance in property taxation. The bill is now in the Senate Tax Committee where it is expected to receive a hearing soon.

Preserving the Integrity of Public Assistance Programs (HB 2004):

Last week I wrote about Senate Substitute for HB 2004, a bill that would force the Kelly Administration to supply information to the federal government regarding Kansans who are receiving SNAP benefits, the taxpayer funded food stamp program. I stated that S. Sub for 2004 would “*ensure Kansas fully complies with federal requests to combat fraud, waste, and abuse in programs such as SNAP*” and that the Administration’s refusal to provide the information was “*costing the State \$10 million quarterly*”.

Well, clearly the “nudge” from the Senate got Governor Kelly’s attention. On Friday, February 27th, the governor announced that she would now cooperate

with the federal government by providing the requested information. Kelly stated the reason for her reversal of position was that she had “*secured an agreement from the USDA that protects Kansans’ personal private data from being shared with foreign governments*”. Really? Does the governor truly believe that normal thinking Kansans will believe that line—the federal government was planning to share American’s personal information with foreign governments? Give us a break! Kansans are smarter than that.

Another Look at Protecting Taxpayer Money: In 2017, the Legislature established the Office of Inspector General (OIG), an independent division of the Kansas Attorney General’s Office. The OIG is charged with overseeing taxpayer funded programs like SNAP, TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) and Medicaid.

On February 23rd, the OIG released a report that stated Medicaid had paid \$798,620 in improper payments to women who appear to have been fraudulently enrolled in the state’s Medicaid program for pregnant women. The audit looked at 151 beneficiaries ages 45 and older from Jan. 2023, through Dec. 2024. Of the 151 beneficiaries audited, the OIG identified 101 (67%) who had no pregnancy claims submitted to Medicaid. The report stated, “*These beneficiaries lacked claims for prenatal care, delivery, or post-partum care which suggests they were never pregnant*”.

I understand most Kansans are generous and more than willing to provide aid to pregnant women, and that it’s easy to qualify for benefits in the program since the state accepts self-attestation of pregnancy for Medicaid eligibility. However, that does not excuse KDHE from verifying eligibility, especially for women age 45 and above—past the normal childbearing age. This is another issue the State needs to address.

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

Virgil Peck
State Senator