

THE PECK PERSPECTIVE

(From the Capitol)

April 13, 2026

The 1960s Dallas Cowboys quarterback turned Monday Night Football commentator, Don Meredith, (yep, showing my age) used to break into the song, “turn out the lights, the party’s over” near the end of a football game. The Kansas Legislature is not a party or a game, but the lights were “turned out” on the 2026 legislative session at 1:30 a.m. on April 11th.

Sadly, the end of the session was marred with critical words by some in both chambers against the other chamber. The criticism precipitated from the failure to get property tax relief for Kansas taxpayers signed into law. Although both chambers passed legislation (HB 2745) to provide real tax relief, the bill was vetoed and there were not sufficient votes to override the veto. A last-ditch effort to pass tax-relief passed (HB 2043), but the bill will likely be vetoed. With the session concluded, there’s no opportunity for a veto override.

Speaking of vetoes. The final two days of the session saw time spent taking up veto overrides. History will mark Governor Kelly’s time as the governor who issued the most vetoes and the legislature cemented her place as the most overridden Governor in Kansas history. More vetoes are likely to come, but at this point the number of vetoes during the 2026 session totaled 27 — plus another 41 line-item vetoes in the budget.

In total, 21 bills will become law “notwithstanding the Governor’s veto”.

Some of the veto overrides are:

SB 30: Requires approval by the Legislature for new occupational licenses or significant changes to existing licenses by certain Executive Branch agencies.

SB 361: Allows Kansas to participate in the federal tax credit program, helping to keep Kansans’ contributions to scholarship granting organizations in Kansas. The bill also prohibits government agencies from adopting a rule or regulation that’s more stringent than the federal law in implementing the program.

SB 391: Prohibits a city or county in Kansas from adopting or enforcing an ordinance or resolution that requires landlords to rent or lease their property to persons who are on a government assistance program, do not meet the landlord’s income qualifications or credit scores, have a negative eviction history, property damage history, or criminal history.

HB 2004: Requires the Department for Children and Families and the Office of Inspector General to cooperate in the detection, investigation, and

prosecution of fraud in public assistance programs related to cash assistance, childcare assistance, SNAP (food stamps), etc.

HB 2329: Authorizes Kansas courts to sentence juveniles considered chronic offenders (as defined in law) to a juvenile correctional facility if they are assessed as moderate- or high-risk on a risk and needs assessment.

HB 2333: Establishes the Kansas Intellectual Rights and Knowledge (KIRK) Act (Act) setting restrictions on, and requirements of, public, post-secondary educational institutions regarding individuals participating in non-commercial expressive activities and allows for a cause of action to be brought by an individual harmed by a college or university that violates the Act.

HB 2603: Prohibits a municipality from adopting or enforcing an ordinance, code, regulation, etc. of battery-charged security fences (these are generally a fence within a fence that has a battery-powered security system).

HB 2635: Prohibits a state agency, department or subdivision, or a county, city, or other political subdivision from enacting or adopting a law, ordinance, resolution, rule, regulation, policy, or any other similar measure that requires Pregnancy Care Centers to offer or perform abortions, offer or distribute abortion-inducing drugs, or make a referral for an abortion.

HB 2729: Requires the Kansas Dept. of Health and Environment to develop forms that abortion providers must provide to a woman seeking an abortion at least 24 hours in advance of an abortion procedure or prior to providing or inducing a medication abortion.

I'll only mention one veto overridden in the budget. The governor was not pleased with the pay increase given to state employees, calling it not "meaningful", so she vetoed the entirety of the legislative branches' budget. That meant no pay for legislators or their staff starting in July. That veto was overridden, but there were 39 no votes in the House and 11 in the Senate. Anyone think the democrats and few republicans who voted no will deny their legislative salary starting in July?

In fairness, not every veto to the budget bill was bad. I fought against a provision in the budget that set aside \$50 million for a loan to a company in the aviation industry defined as "an entity engaged in the business of maintaining, repairing or overhauling aircraft in Kansas." The loan would have resulted in a loss of \$1 million in annual interest to the state. The Governor vetoed that provision.

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

Virgil Peck
State Senator