

THE PECK PERSPECTIVE

(From the Capitol)

February 16, 2026

As the legislative session moves into the sixth week, we're now only days away from Turnaround—the unofficial halfway point. Last week was somewhat uneventful as the Senate processed mostly non-controversial bills, sending them to the House. Below is information about a few of them.

Turnaround is when non-exempt committees must determine which bills will pass the committee allowing them to be considered by the full chamber. Although a bill that does not make it through the committee process is considered dead for the session, an attempt to amend the idea (language) into another bill remains a possibility.

First Veto in 2026 (SB 244): Those who predicted Governor Kelly would veto SB 244—the bill strengthening and clarifying the Women’s Bill of Rights—were right. I was in the camp that thought she may let the bill become law without her signature. After all, SB 244 passed both chambers with more than adequate votes to override a veto. A veto override vote will take place soon and Kansas Republicans will continue to protect females from males intruding into their spaces, hopefully putting the issue to rest for a while.

Disposal of Unclaimed Cremated Remains (HB 2331): Near the end of the 2025 session, the House unanimously passed HB 2331, a bill relating to the disposition of unclaimed cremated remains. Last week, the Senate also passed HB 2331 unanimously. However, during the Senate Committee hearing, several amendments were added.

One amendment specifies that if the deceased was a military veteran, the final disposition costs would be paid pursuant to veterans’ burial laws and that no person or organization who accepts custody of the remains would be liable for the costs of the cremation.

Another amendment, not directly related to cremation, allows licensed embalmers and licensed funeral directors to complete their required six hours of continuing education live online rather than in person.

HB 2331 went back to the House, where they will decide to accept the Senate amendments or call for a conference committee to negotiate the differences.

Another Distinctive License Plate (SB 403): Most legislators do not know the number of options Kansas vehicle owners have when it comes to selecting

a distinctive license plate for their vehicle. I know I don't. With the passage of SB 403, another one was added.

SB 403 authorizes issuance of the Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever distinctive license plates after January 1, 2027, and allows Pheasants Forever, Inc. to set royalties for use of its logo at an amount of not less than \$25 nor more than \$100. The plate can be used on a passenger car or truck.

Golf Carts on Sidewalks (SB 367): If SB 367 becomes law, a city would be authorized to allow a person age 16 or older and holds a valid class C driver's license to drive a golf cart on a sidewalk to and from a golf course. Again, driving a golf cart on a sidewalk would only be allowed if the city's officials specifically authorize it.

Protecting Puppies and Kittens (SB 344): Current law requires animal shelters and pounds to keep an animal, unless its owner is known, or it is injured, sick or diseased, for a minimum of three business days. However, most shelters are not staffed to deal with a neonate animal, and sadly, some do not survive due to a lack of adequate care.

A bill that went through the Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee, SB 344, would allow animal shelters to place neonate animals in foster homes where they can receive additional attention and require the shelter to display a photograph of the animal in their facility as well as on their website. The term "neonate," is defined in the bill as "*a newborn animal that is less than eight weeks of age and dependent on such animal's mother or a caregiver due to undeveloped biological functions related to feeding, regulation of body temperature and elimination of waste*".

Another provision in SB 344 increases the amount of time the Kansas Department of Agriculture, Division of Animal Health, would be required to maintain records of inspections by the Division to not less than five years.

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

Virgil Peck
State Senator