

Kansas is one of the top hemp growing states, but a federal change threatens the industry

Dylan Lysen
KCUR

A recent federal law change aimed at tightening regulations on consumable hemp products could significantly alter the industry in Kansas that has grown to be one of the largest in the country.

Hemp producers and advocates say the change passed in the funding bill to end the government shutdown last month could bring the budding agricultural industry to a grinding halt.

While the updated law intends to target hemp products with intoxicating effects, it may still hurt Kansas hemp farmers, even though the vast majority of their hemp is processed into nonconsumable products like fiber.

The change could also spell the end for legal consumable products that feature cannabidiol, or CBD, which does not have an intoxicating effect like THC products.

Heath Martin is the owner of Kancana, which processes hemp for growers, and Butler Hemp Co., where he sells his own consumable products. He said both are in danger if the law goes into effect unchanged in November 2026.

“My business would cease to exist,” Martin said.

The updated law limits the amount of THC in hemp products to 0.4 milligrams per container. THC is the psychoactive compound in cannabis plants, like marijuana. It’s meant to close a loophole that allowed stores to sell hemp-derived THC products that can get users high.

Hemp has much lower levels of THC than marijuana. Yet, some hemp-derived THC products that can get users intoxicated reached store shelves in states like Kansas, where marijuana consumption has not been legalized.

Still, growing and processing hemp with just 0.4 milligrams of THC will

be difficult. Kelly Rippel, co-founder of Kansans for Hemp, said it may be impossible for Kansas farmers to reach that requirement.

“Only certain producers or processors would be able to meet that,” Rippel said, “and those would include pharmaceuticals and researchers.”

Only about 9% of Kansas hemp is processed into consumable CBD products, which are used for health purposes.

Martin said his storefront sells both hemp-derived CBD and THC products, like drinks. He said he follows Kansas law that limits THC in hemp products to 0.3% by weight.

But the new federal law would derail his business. The looming change has already affected it.

“Fear is almost as bad as the law changing itself,” Martin said, “because there’s never been good clarification at the state level or the federal level on exactly what products are legal and aren’t.”

Hemp products

When the federal government legalized hemp growing and processing in 2018, Kansas saw a rush of farmers jump into the action. But the number of growers fell over the years as the demand for CBD oil products dropped.

The majority of farmers who stuck with the crop focus on industrial hemp products. Now, more than 87% of the hemp planted in Kansas is used for non-consumable goods, including fiber that can be made into rope and clothing.

Those products are different from the consumable hemp products targeted by the law change. But that part of the industry may be in jeopardy as well.

Sarah Stephens, CEO of Midwest Hemp Technologies in Augusta, Kansas, said that her ability to sell those products should not be affected by the law. But she said it still paints all hemp products in a

bad light that endangers the whole industry.

“I’ve had two customers today looking for assurances that our products aren’t going to be affected by the new rules,” Stephens said in a recent email, “and one prospective customer who said they wouldn’t want to carry hemp grain products at this time in light of the current political environment.”

Growing industry

In recent years, Kansas hemp farmers have grown into a national player in the industry.

Braden Hoch, an area supervisor for the Kansas Department of Agriculture, said during a recent Kansas hemp conference that the state’s farmers planted the fifth most hemp crops in the country this year.

That progress could be threatened by the new law. Stephens said Kansas farmers need more thoughtful policy on hemp products to help the industry thrive.

“The hemp grain and fiber industry in Kansas is gaining momentum,” Stephens said in an email, “and we’re well positioned to lead the nationwide growth of this crop on (Kansas) farms.”

Rippel said state lawmakers will need to adopt the federal law change in Kansas, which he expects them to do. But the state will also have discretion over how it’s administered, he said.

That means they can still create more nuanced laws, which he has been calling for over the last six years.

Otherwise, the federal change alone creates too much uncertainty and some Kansas farmers and processors who have heavily invested in hemp may call it quits or leave the state.

“They will kill industries here,” Rippel said.

Operation Round Up awardees selected; more than \$50,000 to be distributed

From Heartland Rural Electric Cooperative

Nonprofits throughout eastern Kansas that serve community members in need will soon receive a total of more than \$50,000 in contributions from Heartland Rural Electric Cooperative members through Heartland’s Operation Round Up program.

“It’s always impressive to see what a difference our members can make by contributing just a little bit of change every month,” said Mark Scheibe, Heartland CEO. “We continue to be proud of our board and our members for helping the neediest in their communities through this program.”

Through Operation Round Up, participating Heartland members’ electric bills are rounded up to the next dollar each month. The additional amount is collected and pooled into a fund for distribution to charitable organizations that provide food, clothing, shelter, medical care, education, and other direct services for those in need.

Funds collected through the Operation Round Up program are administered by a panel of volunteer trustees selected by the Heartland Rural Electric Cooperative Board of Directors from throughout Heartland’s 12-county service area.

Applications were accepted in October and November and were reviewed by the Operation Round Up Board of Trustees at its annual meeting on Dec.1.

Grant recipients for 2026 are listed below in alphabetical order. Each will receive between \$800 and \$2,400 in January, with a total of \$50,400 distributed.

Recipients are as follows: Alliance of Churches for Christian Living - Chanute; Beacon Food Pantry - Fort Scott; Care to Share Cancer Support Group - Fort Scott; Church of Christ Fontana - Heavenly Hotdogs Food Pantry - Fontana; Columbus Christian Center - Manna Depot - Columbus; Community Food Pantry - Girard; Concern, Inc. - Mound City; Elsmore United Methodist Church - Elsmore; Erie Area Community Christmas Basket Fund - Erie; Erie Federated Church - Erie; First Assembly of God Baxter Springs – Hope Chest - Baxter Springs; First Baptist Church - Cherokee; First Baptist Church of Pleasanton - Pleasanton; First Baptist Church of Riverton - Riverton; First Christian Church – God’s Pantry - Chanute; First Presbyterian Church of Iola - Iola; First United Methodist Church - Columbus; Friends of Library District No. 2 of Linn Co - La Cygne; Galesburg Christian Church - Orange Swan Free Store - Galesburg; Hope Chapel – Moran; Humanity House - Iola; Humboldt Ministerial Alliance - Humboldt Community Food Pantry - Humboldt; Mound City Christian Church – Christian Women’s Service - Mound City; Mound City United Methodist Church - Mound City; Parker United Methodist Church – Helping Hands & Hearts - Parker; Pitt Chapel Church of God - Pittsburg; Prescott United Methodist Church - Reach Out Food Pantry - Prescott; Sacred Heart Catholic Church - Mound City; Second Chances - Blue Mound; Michael Catholic Church – A Meal In His Name - Girard; United Methodist Church - La Cygne Food Pantry - La Cygne; United Women in Faith - Pleasanton; Wings of Warriors - Gas, and Yates Center United Methodist Church - Bowls of Plenty - Yates Center.

Current Operation Round Up trustees include Tom Bradbury of Uniontown, Rev. Daniel Davis of Iola, Carol Houston of Prescott, Nancy Hurd of Columbus, Kelly Perry of Bronson, Sue Stainbrook of Fontana, Mark Taylor of Girard, and Sharon Young of Erie.

The Community Foundation of Southeast Kansas manages Operation Round Up contributions and disburses funds on behalf of Heartland.

Kansas individual income tax revenue surges as retail sales and corporate income taxes falter

Tim Carpenter
Kansas Reflector

TOPEKA — A month of softness in state revenue from corporate income tax and retail sales tax led Gov. Laura Kelly to urge the 2026 Kansas Legislature to take a cautionary approach to managing the state’s finances.

Kelly, a Democrat approaching the final year of her second term as governor, responded to the November revenue report Monday by asking the Republican-controlled Legislature to be judicious as it worked to craft the new state government budget.

“November’s tax collections were nearly on target overall,” Kelly said. “While individual income tax collections were up, corporate income tax collections were again below estimates and significantly below November 2024 levels.”

The Kansas Department of Revenue’s report offered a snapshot of where Kansas stood five months into the current fiscal year compared to the initial five months of last fiscal year.

She said the state collected this fiscal year \$74 million less in corporate income tax than last fiscal year. In addition, retail sales tax revenue slipped by \$53 million in a year-to-year comparison.

The state’s bottom line, however, stayed in positive territory for the fiscal year because individual income tax collections

surged by \$173 million, or 9.9%, above last year’s performance at this juncture. Overall, considering all sources of state tax revenue, Kansas sits \$58 million above the five-month total reported through November 2024.

“As I develop my next budget proposal I am not considering just fiscal year 2027. I am also looking on to the out-years to keep our state on solid financial footing,” Kelly said.

She said Kansas was on pace to erode a \$3 billion cash reserve by spending \$300 million to \$700 million more annually than collected in taxes.

In the past, Kansas House Speaker Dan Hawkins, R-Wichita, said the governor was fond of “grandstanding” when speaking about state budget issues. He said Republican lawmakers were committed to showing Kansans “results that can be achieved with level-headed and carefully crafted policy.”

Kansas governors submit to the Legislature in January of each year a constitutionally balanced budget for consideration by the House and Senate.

The Republican-controlled Legislature — as it did in 2024 — has been working on an alternative budget bill. The House-Senate budget committee scheduled two days of meetings next week to hammer out details of its outline for the fiscal year starting July 1, 2026.

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