

# State and National News

## Senate panel reworks property tax bill approved by House

By Brad Cooper, Sunflower State Journal  
 March 9, 2026 - A Senate committee on Monday rewrote a property tax bill approved by the House that lowers the threshold for when a protest petition could be used to stop local governments from spending more in property taxes than they did the year before.

The Senate tax committee approved a bill allowing voters to reject a budget that spends more in property taxes than it did the year before plus the Midwest consumer price index up to 3% more, whichever is less.

The House version of the bill set a little higher threshold, giving residents the ability to stop local government budgets that raised 3% more in property taxes from the year before.

Unlike typical protest petitions that initiate elections, the bill allows taxpayers to sign a protest petition to veto a local government budget that raises more in property taxes than it did a year earlier if enough voters sign the document.

The Senate bill allows for a protest petition if it's signed by at least 10% of the registered voters as of Jan. 1 in the taxing jurisdiction where the protest petition was filed.

If the petition is successful, the local government budget would be returned to the same level of property taxes it

collected the year before.

Legislative analysts said that would mean that 34,471 signatures would need to be collected from registered voters in Sedgwick County to veto a county budget that exceeded the property tax limit.

Likewise, 46,729 signatures would be needed to reject a property tax increase for Johnson County, 8,061 signatures would be needed to reject a budget in Douglas County, 5,736 signatures would be needed in Leavenworth County, 3,985 would be needed in Riley County, 2,133 would be needed in Montgomery County and 1,565 would be needed in Cherokee County.

Those numbers only reflect 10% of the registered voters in those counties as of Jan. 1, 2026.

Fewer signatures would be needed to challenge budgets in smaller jurisdictions, like cities, school districts, fire districts and sewer districts. Unlike the House bill, the Senate bill would apply to school districts.

The Senate bill is different from the House version, which set the number of signatures required to get a protest petition at no less than 5% of the voters who cast a ballot in the last general election for secretary of state in the local taxing jurisdiction where the budget was approved.

Democratic state Sen. Ethan Corson of Fairway tried to raise the bar for the number of signatures that would be

needed to get a protest petition.

He proposed increasing the threshold to more than 50% of the registered voters in a taxing jurisdiction to initiate a protest petition. The committee voted down his proposal.

Corson said the Senate would never impose a 10% spending threshold on itself where just four senators out of 40 could reject the chamber's budget.

"We would never operate in that manner," Corson said. He also said the Legislature would not allow 10% of state voters — about 200,000 — to reject a budget. "I just do think there's a tyranny-of-the minority issue with this legislation," he said.

He noted that local officials have all been elected by their residents and "have come together and passed a budget that they think reflects those values."

"I don't think there's ever been a situation where government operates that way, where 10% of the people can block everything," Corson said.

The House bill allowed local governments to take in new revenue with some exceptions, including new real property that's annexed, property that's changed in use, or expiration of tax breaks where the property returns to the tax rolls. Also, additional property tax revenues that will be spent on bonds for obligations that existed before July 1 of this year would be included in the calculation of the budget. The



Senate bill eliminates the exceptions, which drew concerns from cities.

Sedgwick County had asked the all property tax increases attributable to bonds — not just bonds existing before this July 1 — be included in the calculation for the property tax limit so it could retain its AAA bond rating.

"The residents of Sedgwick County benefit from our AAA bond rating, which reduces the cost of all bonds we issue by lowering the interest rates we pay," County Commission Chair Jeff Blubaugh told the committee in written testimony last week.

There was an effort in the committee to include an ex-

ception for bonding in the bill, but it was unsuccessful.

Corson said he felt that it was unfair for local governments to pay more interest for bonds because Wall Street gets nervous about how a revenue cap might affect local governments' ability to repay borrowing.

However, Republican state Sen. Caryn Tyson of Parker, chair of the Senate tax committee, said bonding was an exception to local government tax lid that was repealed several years ago because it wasn't effective.

The bill limiting local tax revenues is part of an effort this legislative session to limit property taxes.

The Senate has already approved a constitutional amendment that would cap the taxable assessed property values at 3% with several limited exceptions, including new construction or improvements and if there is an error calculating the tax assessment. The bill passed 30-10.

A House committee last week sent the bill to the chamber.

As originally proposed, the amendment would have gone to voters to ratify during this year's primary election.

As amended in the House, the measure would go on the ballot during the general election.

**Legal Notice**  
 (Published in the Belle Plaine News / Oxford Register on Thursday February 26, 2026, Thursday March 05, 2026 and Thursday March 12, 2026)

**IN THE THIRTIETH JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT, SUMNER COUNTY, KANSAS**  
**CIVIL DEPARTMENT**  
**AARON MORELAND**  
 Plaintiff,  
 vs.  
**MICHAEL L. DAVIS; THE UNKNOWN HEIRS EXECUTORS, ADMINISTRATORS, DEVISEES, TRUSTEES, CREDITORS, AND ASSIGNS OF CAROLYN M. DAVIS, DECEASED; STATE OF KANSAS, DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE, DIVISION OF MOTOR VEHICLES; STATE OF KANSAS, KANSAS HIGHWAY PATROL;**  
 Defendants.  
 Case No. SU-2026-CV-000127 PURSUANT TO CHAPTER 60 OF K.S.A.

**NOTICE OF SUIT**  
 The State of Kansas to: Michael L. Davis The Unknown Heirs, Executors, Administrators, Devisees, Trustees, Creditors and Assignees of Carolyn M. Davis, deceased; State of Kansas, Department of Revenue, Division of Motor Vehicles State of Kansas, Kansas Highway Patrol and the unknown heirs, executors, administrators, devisees, trustees, creditors and assigns of such of the Defendants as may be deceased, and the unknown spouses of the Defendants; the unknown officers, successors, trustees, creditors and assigns of such Defendants as are existing, dissolved or dormant corporations; the unknown executors, administrators, devisees, trustees, creditors, successors and assigns of such Defendants as are or were partners or in partnership; and the unknown guardians, conservators and trustees of such of the Defendants as are minors or are in anyway under legal disability; and the unknown heirs, executors, administrators, devisees, trustees, creditors and assigns of any persons alleged to be deceased.

You are hereby notified that a Petition has been filed in the Thirtieth Judicial District Court, Sumner County, Kansas, Civil Department by Aaron Moreland, praying that it be adjudged to be the owner in fee simple of the real property and manufactured home; that the Court determine that any adverse claims of the Defendants and all persons claiming by, through or under them to any estate or interest therein be determined; that all right, title and interest to said real property be quieted as to all Defendants, their heirs and assigns in said Petition; and for such other and further relief as Plaintiffs may be entitled to by law or in equity. You are hereby required to plead to said Petition on or before the 8th day of April, 2026 in said Court in Wellington, Kansas. Should you fail therein, judgment and decree will be entered in due course upon said Petition.

FRANK M. OJILE (11991 Attorney at Law  
 727 N. Waco, Suite 165  
 Wichita, Kansas 67203  
 Telephone: 263-5267  
 ATTEST: (Seal)  
 MARILYN TARGOS  
 Clerk of the District Court  
 Sumner County, Kansas

## Supreme Court Nominating Commission to meet by videoconference March 12

**TOPEKA**—The Supreme Court Nominating Commission will meet by videoconference at 11 a.m. Thursday, March 12, to discuss the procedure it will follow to seek nominations to fill a vacancy created when Justice Marla Luckert retires March 28.

The meeting will be broadcast live on the Kansas judicial branch YouTube channel at [www.youtube.com/@KansasJudicialBranch](http://www.youtube.com/@KansasJudicialBranch).

**Nominating commission**  
 The Supreme Court Nominating Commission has nine members. There is one lawyer and one nonlawyer from each of the state's four congressional districts, plus one lawyer who serves as chair-

person.

Nonlawyers are appointed by the governor. Lawyers are elected by other lawyers within their congressional districts. The chairperson is elected by lawyers statewide.

**Merit-based selection process**  
 Justices are appointed to the Supreme Court through a merit-based nomination process Kansas voters added to the Kansas Constitution in 1958. The process involves the Supreme Court Nominating Commission, which reviews nominees, and the governor, who makes the appointments.

When there is a vacancy on the bench, the Supreme Court Nominating Commission reviews applications and con-

ducts public interviews of nominees. The commission narrows the nominee pool to three names that it sends to the governor. The governor chooses one nominee to appoint.

**Eligibility requirements**  
 A nominee must be:  
 - at least 30 years old; and  
 - a lawyer admitted to practice in Kansas and engaged in the practice of law for at least 10 years, whether as a lawyer, judge, or full-time teacher at an accredited law school.

**Selection criteria**  
 When the Supreme Court Nominating Commission reviews nominees for justice,

they look at the person's:  
 - legal and judicial experience;  
 - educational background;  
 - character and ethics;  
 - temperament;  
 - service to the community;  
 - impartiality; and  
 - respect of colleagues.

**Judicial conduct**  
 Justices must follow the law and not be influenced by politics, special interest groups, public opinion, or their own personal beliefs.

Justices demonstrate their accountability by following a Code of Judicial Conduct that establishes standards of ethical behavior. They also take an oath of office that includes swearing to support, protect,

and defend the U.S. Constitution and Kansas Constitution.

**Retention elections**  
 After a new justice serves one year on the court, he or she must stand for a retention vote in the next general election to remain in the position. If retained, the justice serves a six-year term.

**Accommodation**  
 Any person with a disability who requires accommodation to access the meeting should notify the judicial branch ADA coordinator as early as possible:  
 ADA Coordinator  
 ADA@kscourts.gov  
 785-296-2256  
 TTY at 711

## State News Briefs

### Bomb Threat Forces Evacuation at Kansas City International Airport

A bomb threat prompted the evacuation of passengers at Kansas City International Airport on Sunday, March 8, temporarily disrupting flights and airport operations.

Airport officials received a report around 11:50 a.m. about a potential explosive device in the terminal and a nearby parking garage. Authorities quickly evacuated travelers from the terminal, held arriving aircraft on taxiways away from the gates, and diverted traffic from the airport while law enforcement investigated.

Police, FBI agents, bomb squad members and K-9 units searched the terminal and a suspicious vehicle in the parking garage as a precaution. About 2,000 passengers were affected by the evacuation, with many directed onto the

tarmac while the investigation continued. After a thorough sweep, officials determined the threat was not credible, and the terminal reopened shortly after 2 p.m., with flights gradually resuming normal operations.

Authorities say the incident remains under investigation and reminded the public that making threats against airports is a federal crime.

**Southwestern Greenhouse to Host Orchid Open House April 4**  
 Winfield, Kan., March 10, 2026 — Southwestern College invites the community to experience the beauty of its orchid collection during a special Open Greenhouse Event on Saturday, April 4, from 2-4 p.m. The event will be held in the Southwestern College Greenhouse, where visitors can explore one of the campus's most colorful seasonal displays.

Many of the greenhouse's orchids are currently in peak bloom, offering guests a chance to see a wide variety of vibrant colors, unique shapes, and delicate fragrances. The collection includes numerous species and hybrid orchids cultivated by Southwestern College faculty.

The open house is free and open to the public. Guests are encouraged to stop by, stroll through the greenhouse, and learn more about the plants that thrive in this carefully maintained environment.

The Southwestern College Greenhouse provides hands-on learning opportunities for students in the natural sciences and serves as a space for plant conservation and community engagement.

For more information about the Southwestern College Greenhouse, visit [www.sckans.edu/greenhouse](http://www.sckans.edu/greenhouse).

**KDOT Celebrates Ribbon Cutting at Northeast Kansas Headquarters in Topeka**  
**TOPEKA** — Governor Laura Kelly joined Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT) Secretary Calvin Reed, agency staff, and local leaders today to celebrate the ribbon cutting of the new KDOT District One-Northeast Kansas headquarters campus in Topeka.

The ribbon cutting featured remarks from Governor Kelly, KDOT Secretary Calvin Reed, KDOT Bureau Chief of Main-

tenance Robert Fuller, and representatives from the project's architecture and construction teams, HTK Architects and Crossland Construction Company, followed by a reception and tour of the new 73,000-square-foot building.

"Thanks to the support of Governor Kelly and the Kansas Legislature, KDOT's District 1 now has facilities that support they work they do to keep Kansans moving," said KDOT Secretary Calvin Reed. "This is truly a building we can be proud of that creates a more efficient and safer environment for our most important resource, our employees."

The headquarters serves KDOT's northeast Kansas operations and includes updated offices, meeting spaces, and maintenance shops with 15 heavy-duty vehicle work bays used to service highway maintenance equipment. The district oversees maintenance and operations of the state transportation system across 17 counties in northeast Kansas.

The new facility replaces the previous district office, which was built in 1936 when KDOT was the Kansas Highway Commission. Although additions and renovations were made over the years, the building no longer met the needs of modern operations. A feasibility study completed in 2007 found that a new facility would improve operational efficiency and reduce long-term maintenance costs.

Governor Kelly included funding for the project in her FY 2023 Budget.

Future plans for the site include a District One Materials Lab and a state surplus warehouse. The property includes parcels previously owned by KDOT, acquired from the Kansas Turnpike Authority, and purchased from a private owner. For more information about KDOT, please visit the KDOT website.

**Retired General Files for Kansas House Seat**  
 Retired Thomas Palenske has filed to run as a Republican for the Kansas House seat formerly held by John Resman, who died unexpectedly last week.

Palenske is seeking the 121st District seat and said he plans to focus on addressing property taxes, growing the state's economy and protecting conservative values.

"I have a deep passion for improving the lives of my fellow Kansans and want to give back to a state that has blessed our family with so much," Palenske said in a statement.

A Topeka native who now lives in Olathe, Palenske recently retired after a 39-year military career. He most recently served as commander of the 36th Wing at Andersen Air Force Base in Guam, where he oversaw more than 8,000 military and civilian personnel and helped lead recovery efforts following Typhoon Mawar in 2023.

Palenske joins Republican Mike Storm, who has also filed for the seat.

Precinct leaders are expected to meet this week to select a replacement to fill the remainder of Resman's term, though Palenske has said he does not plan to seek that temporary appointment.

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