

STATE NEWS

‘Wanton abuse of power’: Kelly, union leader criticize southwest Kansas ICE raids, seek reform

BY MORGAN CHILSON
Kansas Reflector

Federal immigration officials subjected southwest Kansas to a “wanton abuse of power,” Gov. Laura Kelly said, and she pledged to union members that she would work to restore immigrants’ sense of belonging and security.

Kelly spoke at a United Food and Commercial Workers member meeting Monday in Dodge City, highlighting the importance of immigrants in Kansas. The union’s local chapter is based in Bel Aire and represents 14,852 members in meatpacking, grocery, food processing, healthcare, retail, and other industries.

On Sept. 22, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents arrived in Garden City, Liberal and Dodge City, as well as smaller surrounding towns, to detain immigrants who didn’t have proper documentation, ultimately arresting about 110 people. No comprehensive list of those arrested has been released.

“Under no circumstances should you have been subjected to the wanton abuse of power you experienced two weeks ago,” Kelly said. “I wanted to come that week to assure you that your governor and your state law enforcement officials were with you. I didn’t come then because after several calls with Martin (Rosas) and others, I believe my presence would have put all of you in more jeopardy.

“But I’m here now to listen and to do whatever I can, whatever my administration can, to restore your sense of belonging, your sense of security, and your pride in being a Kansan,” she added.

Martin Rosas, president of the union’s Local 2, encouraged union members to make their voices heard by voting.

After the meeting, Rosas said the majority of industries in the area rely on an immigrant workforce, and often workers come from “mixed status” families, meaning one person will have legal papers to work but the rest of the family won’t.

The meatpacking industry uses E-Verify, the government system that confirms work status, he said. But the people who didn’t go to work in southwest Kansas were afraid to leave their families because they may not be here legally.

“They don’t show up for work, not because they can’t attend to work. It’s because they’re afraid to leave their house when we got these goons knocking on people’s doors, kicking doors open, shooting people, killing people. We have seen that,” Rosas said.

Immigrants have seen delays since 2016 in government action to provide a legal pathway to residency or citizenship, and then the “aggressive position that this administration has taken against immigrants as a whole or people of color” has generated fear, he said.

Politicians can no longer delay or “kick the can down the road,” Rosas said.

“The demand for labor workforce is growing in the United States,” he said. “However, the current immigration system doesn’t recognize that need. While we evolve with more and more need for workers in America, the politician has not done anything, other than like this current administration attacking the immigrants.”

Immigrant labor is crucial for the U.S. workforce, he said. Positive responses to ICE and deporting immigrants online make Rosas realize how people think about the immigrant workforce.

“When you see those reactions, everything is a result of years of dehumanizing the immigrant workforce that is very significant to the production and the economy of the United States,” Rosas said.

Rosas, who is an immigrant and became a U.S. citizen in 1996, said that when he sits down and talks with people one-on-one, they have a different view of the immigration system and understand the need for reform.

He pointed to recent news that Oklahoma’s Republican Gov. Kevin Stitt recognized that if undocumented people left the state, it would put a “huge

dent” in the economy, Rosas said.

He referred to comments Stitt made to NewsNation offering full support to Trump for closing borders but saying that people who aren’t criminals shouldn’t be deported because beef prices will go up. Stitt gave an example of an Oklahoma immigrant who had a marijuana violation 20 years ago. Although the man’s employer was willing to vouch for him, ICE deported him.

“People have to analyze, really, what is the cost of us not doing anything with immigration?” Rosas said. “No one, including myself, no one is loving to have open borders. If you’ve been in the country for a period of time, you’ve been doing everything according with the law, good civic human being, good human person, you should be allowed to regularize your status. The system itself has created this problem, and by not taking action, it’s aggravating the problem to the point where it is today.”

Kelly called for immigration overhaul in her remarks, asking the nation to “return to being a beacon of civility, humanity and opportunity.”

She noted how the makeup of southwest Kansas has shifted since she first moved to the state in 1986. As executive director of the Kansas Recreation and Park Association, she visited recreation centers, parks, ball fields and other areas, which offered opportunities for area families.

“But I was also struck by how segregated programs were,” she said. “The children of the white families played in the city-sanctioned leagues. The children of the Hispanic families played in their own separate leagues. Fast forward over those 40 years, the entire culture in Southwest Kansas has radically changed.

“Hispanic and Latino citizens and immigrants from other parts of the world now make up the majority of many of our communities,” she said. “The schools, the businesses, the arts, the very economy of Southwest Kansas thrive because of the influx, the integration, and the influence of the multinational makeup of this region.”

U.S. & WORLD

Tropical Storm Isaias intensifies, forecast to threaten Florida as Category 2 hurricane

BY RICHARD TRIBOU
Orlando Sentinel
(TNS)

ORLANDO, Fla. — Tropical Storm Isaias formed Wednesday morning with the National Hurricane Center forecasting it to intensify close to a Category 3 storm before bearing down on the Gulf coast and threatening Florida.

As of the NHC’s 5 p.m. advisory, the center of Isaias was located about 2525 miles west-northwest of Progreso, Mexico and 500 miles south-southwest of the mouth of the Mississippi River moving east-northeast at 8 mph with maximum sustained winds of 65 mph. “Isaias is expected to strengthen and be a strong hurricane when it approaches the northern Gulf Coast on Friday,” said NHC senior hurricane specialist Eric Blake. “The risk of damaging hurricane-force winds is increasing over portions of the Florida Panhandle, southern Alabama, and southern Mississippi.”

A hurricane watch was in effect for Bay St. Louis, Louisiana to Indian Pass, Florida and tropical storm watch from Indian Pass east to the Aucilla River and west of Bay St. Louis to the Jefferson/Plaquemines Parish line. A storm surge watch was also issued from the mouth of the Mississippi River to Yankee-town, Florida.

Tropical-storm-force winds extend out 60 miles from its center. The system had formed as Tropical Depression Nine on Tuesday but is forecast to grow into the Atlantic season’s first hurricane, which would end the longest stretch without a hurricane since satellite tracking began 60 years ago.

The system is forecast to turn to the northeast and north on Thursday approaching the U.S. northern Gulf Coast on Friday night.

The projected path has shifted east to more threaten Florida and the NHC warns that an expanded wind field could spread hundreds of miles

from its center especially threatening land falling to the east of wherever it makes landfall.

The NHC forecast calls for it to become a Category 1 hurricane by Thursday morning and strengthen to Category 2 with 110 mph sustained winds, just shy of Category 3 status, on Friday morning.

Landfall is not expected until late Friday or early Saturday, and its intensity is forecast to drop some. “Vertical wind shear then increases quite dramatically in the final 24 hours before the cyclone reaches the northern Gulf coast, though it is looking more likely that Isaias will be a significant hurricane when it reaches the coast,” said NHC senior hurricane specialist Philippe Papin. “Near landfall, Isaias will also be interacting with the short-wave trough, likely leading to an expanding wind field.”

The system may be compact at first, it’s expected to grow in size. Also of concern is rainfall, with some areas expected to get up to 10 inches along the central Gulf Coast extending from southeastern Louisiana east to the Florida Panhandle, bringing a threat of flash and urban flooding as well as some isolated river flooding. An additional 1-3 inches with amounts up to 5 inches could fall across much of the southeast as far north as the Tennessee Valley and the Carolinas. Gov. Ron DeSantis on Tuesday issued an executive order declaring a state of emergency for 25 Florida counties in preparation for the storm.

“This order will allow the Florida Division of Emergency Management to stage critical preparedness resources and ensure Florida is ready to respond,” DeSantis said in a news release. “Floridians should take this time to get disaster plans in place and ensure their hurricane supply kit is stocked.” Counties under the state of emergency are Baker, Bay, Calhoun, Columbia, Dixie, Escambia, Franklin, Gadsden, Gilchrist, Gulf, Hamilton, Holmes, Jackson, Jefferson, Lafayette, Leon, Liberty, Madison, Okaloosa, Santa Rosa, Suwannee, Taylor, Walton,

Wakulla and Washington.

AccuWeather hurricane expert Nicholas Arman said the system has been organizing faster than expected.

“The environment around it is becoming increasingly favorable for strengthening,” he said. “The warm waters in the Gulf will provide plenty of fuel, and winds high in the atmosphere are lining up in a way that could help the storm strengthen more efficiently.” The hurricane season had previously seen the formation of tropical storms Arthur, Bertha, Cristobal, Dolly, Edouard, Fay, Gonzalo and Hanna.

For the first time in 60 years, however, none has developed into a hurricane in the Atlantic with less than two months left in the season.

Hurricane season began June 1 and runs through Nov. 30, but the height of hurricane season runs from mid-August through mid-October.

The reason for the lack of hurricanes has been an extremely strong El Niño weather pattern, which is warming surface temperatures in the Pacific Ocean. This generates wind shear preventing storms from strengthening in the Atlantic.

Sammy Hadi, a lead meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Miami, told the South Florida Sun Sentinel last week that the “top of these storms that are developing are being blown off.” The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration in August had updated its seasonal forecast to expect between seven and 13 named storms this year. Of those, two to six would become hurricanes. It also predicted that there might not be any major hurricanes this year, or at most two.

Already, 2026 was forecast to have lower-than-average storm generation, and that has been reduced even further with the latest forecasts from the NOAA and other weather groups.

An average year would see 14 named storms and seven hurricanes, with three of those growing to Category 3 strength or higher.

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121 Help Wanted

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• Fall auto

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always true in today’s market,” said Shawn Steward, spokesman for AAA Club Alliance in Kansas. “Before taking on a seven-year loan and a monthly payment approaching \$800, drivers should compare those costs against maintaining a reliable vehicle they already own.”

WHAT VEHICLE BUYERS SHOULD KNOW RIGHT NOW

- New-vehicle prices remain elevated. Kelley Blue Book reports that the average new-vehicle transaction price reached \$50,089 in August 2026, up 1.9% from a year earlier and above \$50,000 for the first time this year.
- Used-vehicle prices also remain high. Cox Automotive reported an average used-vehicle listing price of \$27,239 in August 2026, underscoring continued affordability pressure in the lower-cost segment of the market.
- Used-vehicle demand is being fueled by affordability. With fewer lease returns in recent years and higher

new-vehicle prices, many buyers are competing for a limited supply of reliable used vehicles, keeping prices firm. With gas prices near record highs, fuel-efficient late-model used vehicles are in especially high demand and can sell for more than their Kelley Blue Book value.

- Vehicle age matters, but maintenance matters more. Older vehicles can be safe and dependable, but only if routine maintenance is not deferred. Our AAA Car Care team reports that many roadside service calls involve issues, such as dead batteries or worn tires, that could be prevented with regular upkeep.

ROLLING DEBT AND STICKER SHOCK

New data underscores just how challenging today’s vehicle market has become for buyers. According to Edmunds, the average monthly payment on a financed new vehicle reached a record \$777 in the second quarter of 2026. One in five buyers—20.3%—committed to payments of \$1,000 or more, while the average amount financed climbed to a record \$44,156. Negative equity also remains a concern: Edmunds reported that 29.3% of trade-ins toward new-vehicle pur-

chases were underwater in the fourth quarter of 2025, with those owners owing an average of \$7,214 more than their vehicles were worth.

To offset rising prices, consumers are increasingly stretching loan terms. Edmunds found that a record 36.5% of financed new-vehicle purchases in the second quarter of 2026 carried terms longer than 72 months, while 23.9% extended to 84 months or more. Longer terms can reduce the monthly bill but increase total interest costs; average lifetime interest on a new-vehicle loan reached a record \$9,811.

Many buyers focus on the monthly bill, but the true cost also includes the loan term, down payment, taxes, dealer fees, add-ons, and interest. Ask for an itemized out-the-door price and compare APR offers, including pre-approved financing, before signing.

“Whether buying new or used, AAA encourages consumers to do their homework before signing on the dotted line,” AAA’s Steward added. “It’s not just the sticker price along with taxes and fees; it’s the monthly payment and the long-term impact that can have on a buyer and their budget.”