



**KANSAS
RURAL
CENTER**

FOR THE HEALTH OF THE LAND AND ITS PEOPLE

Kansas Rural Center Legislative Policy Watch

Issue No. 6, February 9, 2024

Legislative Policy Watch is a weekly online publication of the Kansas Rural Center (KRC) during the State of Kansas legislative session. KRC is a private, non-profit organization that promotes the long term health of the land and its people, through education, research and advocacy that advance an ecologically sound, economically viable, and socially just agriculture.

Policy Watch is produced by Paul Johnson, KRC Policy Analyst, pdjohnson@centurylink.net



KRC

Learn About KRC

www.kansasruralcenter.org

2024 Co-Sponsors



FOREIGN OWNERSHIP OF KANSAS LAND DEBATE

It was indeed a spirited hearing before the Senate Federal and State Affairs committee over **Senate Bill(SB) 446**, which prohibits ownership interests in Kansas lands by foreign nationals, foreign businesses, and foreign governments unless authorized by a new State Land Council. This bill was filed by the Committee Chairperson, Sen. Mike Thompson, at the request of the Attorney General. This issue had real debates in the last session through the introduction of three bills that were not passed. There were two days of interim hearings on this topic in September. Now, there are two dueling bills – **SB 446** and **House Bill(HB) 2638** (that was introduced by House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee chair Rep. Ken Rahjes but referred to the House Commerce, Labor and Economic Development Committee). While **SB 446** restricts all foreign ownership over 3 acres without an exemption from the Council, **HB 2638** targets just the six foreign adversary countries (China, Cuba, Russia, North Korea, Iran, Venezuela) listed now by the United States Secretary of State.

The Attorney General was in rare form arguing the merits of SB 446 as an improvement over the bills from last session. The parcel size was lowered from ten acres to three acres. States can regulate aliens from owning land, but the AG argues a blanket restriction is more defensible in court compared to just selecting certain countries or foreign nationals. Having this State Land Council (comprised of the AG, Governor, Secretary of State, KBI director, and the Adjutant General) will provide exemptions, giving Kansas a more direct role in key land acquisitions. Today, the reporting on foreign land ownership is self-reported to USDA, which questions the reliability of the data. Kansas is the only breadbasket rural state with no existing restrictions, while 24 states have some restrictions (with three having complete bans). The AG is as worried about foreign drug cartels as foreign governments in buying land for grower operations (as is happening in Oklahoma, Texas and California). One key instance is in Johnson County, where Cnanao Technology USA (which is China-based) has been given \$34 million in tax incentives along with Industrial Revenue Bonds for an eight-acre site with 112 employees. This \$94.7 million manufacturing plant will make liquid conductive paste used in products such as cell phones and vehicle batteries.

League of Women Voters
of Kansas

www.lwvk.org



Kansas Natural Resource
Council



Climate & Energy
Project

www.climateandenergy.org



Kansas Farmers Union

www.kansasfarmersunion.com



Audubon of Kansas

www.audubonofkansas.org

LAWRENCE
Bird Alliance
formerly known as Jayhawk Audubon Society

Lawrence Bird Alliance

<https://www.jayhawkaudubon.org/>

Donate Today

Testimony of Attorney General Kris Kobach Proponent for SB 446

The opponents to **SB 446** came ready for the fight. The Kansas Farm Bureau (KFB) was the first to testify. KFB is prepared to discuss national security risks and how to protect Kansas and the nation. But this bill is simply governmental overreach. This issue is better settled at the federal level. This bill creates more government by giving a 'State Land Council' with the ability to decide who can and cannot own land in Kansas. There are no standards set for this Council in this bill. This is an open threat to private property rights. The second opponent was the Kansas Livestock Association (KLA). KLA supports free markets. Modern multinational agricultural operations are diverse, with diverse capital structures. Debt financing often comes from foreign sources. According to USDA reports, 32% of foreign-owned agricultural land is held by Canadians, followed by the Netherlands at 12%, Italy at 6%, the UK at 6%, and Germany at 5%. China is less than 1% (with the ownership of Smithfield Foods – raising one-fifth of all American hogs - accounting for 41% of Chinese holdings). Also in opposition were the Kansas Corn Growers, the Kansas Chamber of Commerce and the Kansas Bankers Association.

Testimony John Donley, KFB - Testimony opposing SB 446 – establishing the state land council

Aaron M. Popelka, V.P. of Legal and Governmental Affairs, Kansas Livestock Association - SB 446 AN ACT concerning real property; relating to certain lands; prohibiting the acquisition of ownership interests in such lands by foreign nationals, foreign businesses and foreign governments unless authorized by the state land council; creating the state land council and providing for its membership, powers and duties.

SENATE BILL No. 446

HOUSE BILL No. 2638

**KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
DEAN OF AGRICULTURE**

Dr. Ernie Minton – Dean of the College of Agriculture and Director of K-State Research & Extension – gave the Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources committee an overview of 'Driving Innovation in Agriculture'. The Agriculture Innovation Initiative has a \$210 million goal for a variety of programs. To this point, more than \$149 million has been raised via private gifts, college funds and State funds. In 2023, there was a groundbreaking for the Agronomy Research and Innovation Center as well as the Bilbrey Family Event Center. The Global Food Center is next in 2024. There is now an Institute for Digital Agriculture and Advanced Analytics that will expand digital agriculture at K-State by connecting expertise in four KSU Colleges, KSU-Salina and K-State Research and Extension. Animal Sciences

The Kansas Water Institute (KWI) at KSU was launched in September 2023. There is an interdisciplinary group of 15 staff/faculty that identifies themes and priorities by connecting with more than 75 K-State faculty members from each college. KWI is partnering with four Kansas universities (Emporia, Fort Hays State, KU and Wichita State) along with six State/Federal agencies. Agricultural research awards have climbed from \$58 million in 2019 to \$72 million in 2023. This represents approximately half of the University's research total. K-State 105 is Extension's effort with partners to build economic prosperity for all 105 counties by providing expertise on childcare, housing and other community infrastructures. For 2025, the K-State Research and Extension budget is \$178 million with \$60 million from SGF and \$117 million from other funds (federal, private, and county appropriations). The College of Agriculture has a budget of \$16.5 million (with \$11.5 million from state appropriations and tuition and \$5 million from grants, contracts and other funds). K-State Research and Extension has an employee count of 1,156 statewide.

College of Agriculture Presentation to the Legislature: DRIVING INNOVATION IN AGRICULTURE

LEGISLATIVE NOTES

Medicaid Expansion: The Governor's expansion proposal has been introduced in both chambers but no committee hearings have been scheduled. The Care Arc Health Clinic in Eureka just closed on January 24. It provided health services to county residents of Greenwood and Woodson. There are 59 Kansas' rural hospitals in jeopardy of closing (with 28 at immediate risk).

As another rural Kansas clinic shutter, Kelly renews call for Medicaid expansion

Flat Tax Override: To this point, Republican legislative leaders have not brought the Governor's veto to the House or Senate floor. If the override votes were certain, this maneuver would have already been attempted. With Kansas coming up short over the last four months in State revenues, there may be more caution. If the flat tax bill cannot be passed with a veto override, will there be any other tax cut package considered?

Farm to Foodbank (HB 2564): This bill was heard in the House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee on January 22. It is now scheduled for final action on Wednesday – February 14 - at 3:30 pm in Room 112-N.

HOUSE BILL No. 2564

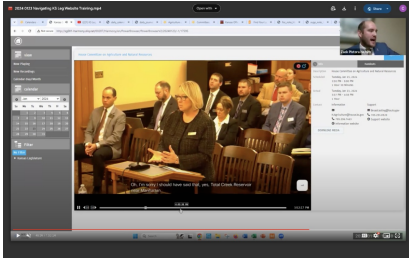
Food Stamps Reform: HB 2673 would direct the Secretary of the Department of Children and Families (DCF) to request a federal waiver from Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) rules and prohibit the purchase of candy and soft drinks with food assistance. This has been requested by other states but never granted. The hearing on this bill will be Tuesday – February 13 – at 1:30 in Room 152-S before the House Welfare Reform Committee.

Fossil Fueled Plants (Coal): There are bills – SB 455 & 456 – next week before the Senate Utilities Committee to make it more difficult for the Kansas Corporation Commission (KCC)

to retire certain electric generating facilities in the utility's rate base.

The hearings are :

Wednesday – February 14 - and Thursday - February 15 – at 1:30 pm in Room 548-S



Navigating the KS Legislative Website

Zack Pistora, KRC Board President, recently held a training on behalf of **Climate Energy Project** and **Sierra Club** to teach Kansas constituents how they may access the Legislature Youtube testimony. This training is an effort to enable Kansans who would like to remotely view the political conversations happening on our behalf.

[View Recording](#)

Upcoming Events



During the legislative session, the League of Women Voters of Kansas (LWVK) hold weekly zoom calls at **4pm on Fridays** with their policy observers. The League has offered to open up these calls for interested Policy Watch readers. Cille King is the policy coordinator for the League.

You will need to email Cille at advocacy@lwwk.org to be added to the notice list. Agendas come out a day or so before the call.

Follow us on social media to stay up-to-date Kansas Rural Center's news and reflections from the Capitol!



[See Previous Editions of Policy Watch](#)

Contributors to KRC are automatically on the Policy Watch e-list, if they provide an e-mail address. KRC provides Updates to the sponsoring organizations including League of Women Voters of Kansas, Kansas Natural Resource Council, Kansas Farmers Union, Climate and Energy Project, Audubon of Kansas, and Lawrence Bird Alliance, who make the Updates available to their memberships.

If you are receiving KRC Policy Watch through one of these organizations and have questions, contact the organization directly.

If you wish to be removed from the KRC list, contact info@kansasruralcenter.org

For questions about Policy Watch content, contact Paul Johnson at pdjohnson@centurylink.net

Kansas Rural Center | PO Box 314, North Newton, KS 67117

[Unsubscribe info@kansasruralcenter.org](mailto:info@kansasruralcenter.org)

[Constant Contact Data Notice](#)

Sent by info@kansasruralcenter.org powered by



Try email marketing for free today!