

COVID-19

Special Section

The COVID-19 Pandemic in Kansas

This summary describes select actions taken by the State of Kansas in response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

Kansas Emergency Management Act

Restrictions due to the spread of COVID-19 in Kansas severely reduced the number of days the 2020 Legislature was in session to 63 days total from the more routine 90 days. Due to the limited number of days, a Special Session was required to finalize legislative activity. One of the major concerns that needed to be addressed was the provisions of the Kansas Emergency Management Act (KEMA) and the needs of a long-term state of disaster emergency (such as the pandemic) versus the short-term natural disasters that KEMA was designed to address.

During the 2020 Special Session, the Legislature passed HB 2016, which was later signed by the Governor. It created and amended laws concerning KEMA. Among other things, the bill:

- Extended the state of disaster emergency through September 15, 2020;
- Allowed the Board of County Commissioners of any county or the governing body of a city to review, amend, or revoke a state disaster declaration; and
- Allowed the Attorney General to act against those who have violated KEMA.

Addition information can be found in article [H-7 Kansas Emergency Management Act](#).

General information on emergency declarations can be found in article [O-3 Disaster Declarations](#).

Judiciary

The pandemic necessitated other legislative changes, such as those concerning the judiciary. House Sub. for SB 102 was passed during the regular session and provided for extension or suspension of court deadlines and allowed the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court to issue videoconferencing orders when the Chief Justice determines it is necessary to secure the health and safety

of court users, staff, and judicial officers during any state of disaster emergency.

The bill's amendments to the speedy trial statute allow the Chief Justice to issue an order to extend or suspend any deadlines or time limitations during any state of disaster emergency.

These provisions are in effect until suspended or 150 days after the state of disaster emergency is terminated. The provisions will expire on March 31, 2021, if not suspended.

Unemployment

Due to the original state of disaster emergency declaration, many businesses had to temporarily close or restrict business activities. As a consequence, the rate of unemployment increased. The federal government established three programs to help address rising unemployment:

The Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) program provided benefits to individuals who were self-employed or not otherwise eligible for unemployment benefits.

The Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC) program extended benefits for those who had exhausted their state benefits.

The Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC) program provided an additional \$600 per week benefit alongside whatever state unemployment benefits an individual received.

Additional information can be found in article [B-2 Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund](#).

As the new federal programs took effect, the number of fraudulent unemployment claims increased. Article [F-1 Consumer Credit Reports and Security Freezes](#) identifies assistance available to people who have been negatively impacted by false unemployment claims or other COVID-19-related scams.

Federal CARES Act Funding

The federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act allocated, from the federal Coronavirus Relief Fund, a total of \$1.25 billion dollars to Kansas to be used to cover expenses that:

- Are necessary expenditures incurred due to the COVID-19 public health emergency;
- Were not accounted for in the budget most recently approved as of March 27, 2020 (the date of enactment of the CARES Act), for the State or government; and
- Were incurred during the period that begins on March 1, 2020, and ends on December 30, 2020.

This funding did not allow for the replacement of lost revenue.

Of the \$1.25 billion, \$116.3 million went directly to Johnson County, \$99.6 million went directly to Sedgwick County, and the remaining \$1.034 billion went to the State of Kansas. The Strengthening People and Revitalizing Kansas (SPARK) Taskforce provided recommendations for the expenditure of these state relief funds. The SPARK Steering Committee consisted of 15 members appointed by the Governor, and the SPARK Executive Committee consisted of 5 members appointed by the Governor.

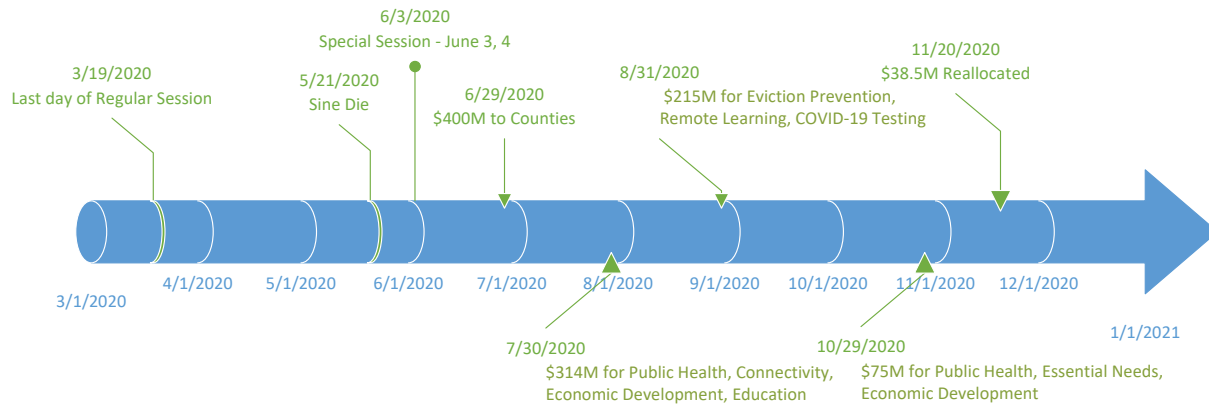
The State Finance Council, which consists of the President of the Senate, the Speaker of the House, the Majority Leaders of both chambers, the Minority Leaders of both chambers, the chairpersons of the Senate Ways and Means Committee and the House Committee on Appropriations, and the Governor as Chairperson, had to then approve the recommendations prior to any distribution.

The disbursement of funding from the state Coronavirus Relief Fund is reflected in the timeline that follows.

The first \$400.0 million was allocated by formula to all 105 Kansas Counties.

COVID-19 Timeline

Kansas receives \$1.034 Billion



The remainder of the funding was directed to programs for three major categories: public health, essential needs and services, and business resiliency and workforce support.

Support for public health included funding for contact tracing, personal protective equipment (PPE), support for nursing homes and local health departments, and community-based services and mental health grants.

Most of the funding was provided to the Kansas Department of Health and Environment, Kansas Department for Aging and Disability Services, and the Department for Children and Families to be distributed as grants. Funding for the Kansas Department of Emergency Management was primarily for equipment and materials to be distributed, such as PPE.

Essential needs and services included funding for services such as housing stability, continuity of state government, and information technology support for the Kansas Department of Labor for upgrades and enhanced fraud identification and mitigation.

Support for business resiliency and workforce development included funding for the Department of Commerce to make grants for broadband connectivity to increase access to telehealth and telemedicine, especially for rural and underserved areas (see articles [G-3 Impact of COVID-19 on Telehealth Advances](#) and [N-1 Broadband Expansion](#)); small business expansion and retention; business operations; and funding to the Kansas Children’s Cabinet to provide grants for remote learning centers for school-age children. Addition information can be found in article [B-3 Department of Commerce—COVID-19 Assistance](#).

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