

KANSAS

The early political history of Kansas was an extension of the national conflict surrounding the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854, which gave the citizens of the territory the right to decide whether or not to permit slavery. Both sides fought to control the area, and ensuing violent clashes between antislavery and proslavery supporters gave the territory the name "Bleeding Kansas." By the eve of the Civil War, the Republicans, who insisted that slavery be kept out of the territories, dominated the political landscape, and when Kansas became a state in 1861 the citizens adopted the Wyandotte Constitution banning slavery. Except for a few isolated periods—such as 1913–1915, when Democrats controlled both houses of the legislature—the Republican Party has dominated Kansas politics ever since. Even during the early 21st century, with a Democratic governor and two of the state's four congressional districts held by Democrats, the very fact of their political existence is more a function of Republican Party division than of an electorally powerful Democratic Party.

Thirty years after statehood, Populists protesting the monopoly of railroads and eastern money-lenders took control of state government—with a platform consisting of promises to make farm foreclosures more difficult and to stop the perceived

POLITICAL HISTORY



Date of statehood: January 29, 1861

Number of constitutions: 1 (1859)

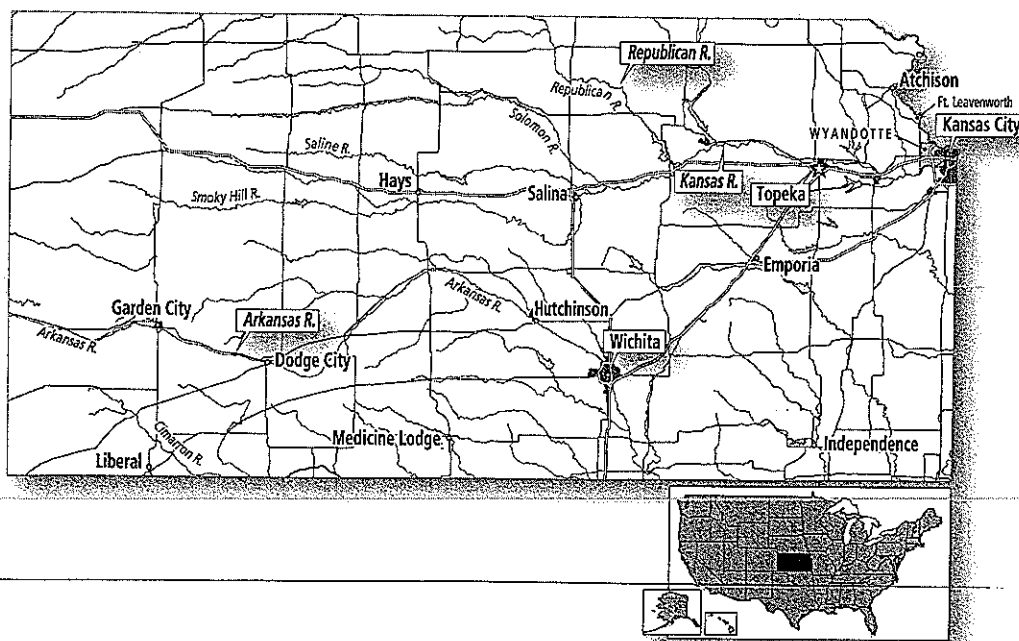
Number of amendments: 93 (as of 2006)

abuses by railroading and banking interests—and introduced another element that remains important in Kansas politics. Yet Populist anger failed to spill over into effective public policy, and the Republicans eventually returned to power with the defeat of the three-term congressman "Sockless" Jerry Simpson in 1898. Nevertheless, the "anti-eastern establishment" and "power to the people" qualities of populism remain artifacts of contemporary Kansas politics, as manifest by a general derision of all things liberal, the broad use of the ballot recall, and the oft-used submission of local tax questions and annexation questions to local voters by governing bodies.

Political Environment

The schismatic drifts of the Republican Party is the dominant feature of Kansas politics. Since the 1980s, there has been a slow but steadily growing split between the traditionally dominant centrist wing of the party and the right wing, which is large-

ly the domain of the organized Christian Right. The right wing is socially and morally conservative and very favorably disposed to the notion of government intrusiveness and regulation, particularly in the banning of all manner of personal activities and behaviors that in other places fall under the heading of a right to privacy. The centrist wing has no express views on social and



POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT



DIRECT DEMOCRACY

Initiative: No
 Referendum: Yes (amendment)
 Recall: Yes

PARTY DISTRIBUTION TRENDS

Governor (2007): Democrat
 Legislature (2007)
 House: 78 Republicans, 47 Democrats
 Senate: 30 Republicans, 10 Democrats

DEMOGRAPHICS

Population (2006): 2,764,075
 Racial/ethnic mix (2006)
 White (non-Hispanic): 81.1%
 Hispanic: 8.6%
 Black: 6.0%
 Asian: 2.2%
 American Indian: 1.0%
 Percentage foreign-born (2005): 5.8%

Religion (2001)

Catholic: 20%	Methodist: 13%
None: 20%	Christian: 10%
Other Protestant: 16%	Other: 7%
Baptist: 13%	Jewish: 1%

Place (2000): Urban 71.4%; Rural 28.6%

Population change

1990–2000: 8.5%
 2000–2006: 2.8%

moral issues and is vigorously in favor of low taxes, small government, and a laissez-faire attitude toward business. These two wings of the Republican Party exist in the uneasiest union imaginable. The right wing, being more inspired and energized, has tended to dominate party leadership. Moderate Republicans, along with the one-third of Kansas voters registered without party preference, are not powerless, however, and they have opted with increasing regularity to vote for moderate Democrats rather than ideologically extreme Republicans.

It now seems clear that Kansas has a de facto “three-party” system, comprising Democrats, conservative Republicans, and “traditional-moderate” Republicans. Conservative Republicans have done well in legislative races, especially in western Kansas, and in some congressional races, resulting

in the election of Sam Brownback to the U.S. Senate and Todd Tiahrt to the U.S. House of Representatives. Moderate Republicans have generally won the governor’s chair, and this de facto third party has sought and successfully developed a bare-majority “policy middle” in the state legislature (especially in the state senate).

The split in the Kansas GOP has resulted in prominent moderate Republicans switching parties to take advantage of the de facto “middle party” voters available to them. Moderate Republicans have switched parties to run for office and then appealed to other moderates to join with Democrats and independents to elect them to office. A prime example was the 2006 loss of the incumbent attorney general and conservative Republican Phil Kline, who was closely associated with the Christian Right, to Johnson County district attorney Paul Morrison, who switched parties to run as a Democrat. (Morrison resigned from office January 31, 2008, because of an extramarital-affair scandal, but the office remained in Democratic hands when Governor Sebelius named his replacement.)

The Kansas State Board of Education is a vivid example of the Republican split and the electoral pattern that has emerged. The board rotates between a conservative majority and a moderate majority almost every election, usually as a result of the conservative majority enacting policies (such as questioning the theory of evolution) that get voters angry enough to vote them out. Then voters soon forget, and conservatives come back into office a few cycles later.

Traditionally, Kansas has received national attention for being a “representative” icon for the United States, both culturally (e.g., *The Wizard of Oz*) and politically (e.g., Alf Landon and U.S. senator and presidential candidate Bob Dole). This attention has continued due to the national focus on the battles in Kansas between the moderates and conservatives. In 2004 a best-selling book was written on the Republican Party in Kansas—Thomas Frank’s *What’s the Matter with Kansas?*—and extensive national coverage has been given to the state board of education evolution controversy in the early 21st century. On the other side, the popularity in Kansas of Governor

Kathleen Sebelius, a Democrat, has also been spotlighted nationally as an example of the lessening power of the Christian Right (her approval ratings have averaged over 60% throughout her governorship).

Elections and Voting Behavior

Kansans are about as civically minded as the average American. Voter turnout in presidential election years has been around the mid-50th percentile of the voting age population, with a peak of approximately 60 percent when favorite son Robert Dole ran for president in 1996. In nonpresidential elections the proportion of the voting age population going to the polls has ranged from 40 percent to 45 percent, according to the Kansas secretary of state. Voting percentages in primary elections are quite low, with 27.6 percent of registered voters voting in 2004 and only 18.2 percent in 2006. Many seats in the state legislature, particularly in the depopulating western counties, often go uncontested, as have U.S. congressional and senatorial seats at times. The Republican Party is the only party likely to have any great number of

ELECTIONS AND VOTING BEHAVIOR



Presidential primary/caucus (2008)

Democratic: Closed caucus (first Tuesday in February); 40 delegates

Republican: Closed caucus (second Saturday in February); 39 delegates

Statewide elections held: Off-year

Voter turnout (2004): 64.2% of voting-age citizens

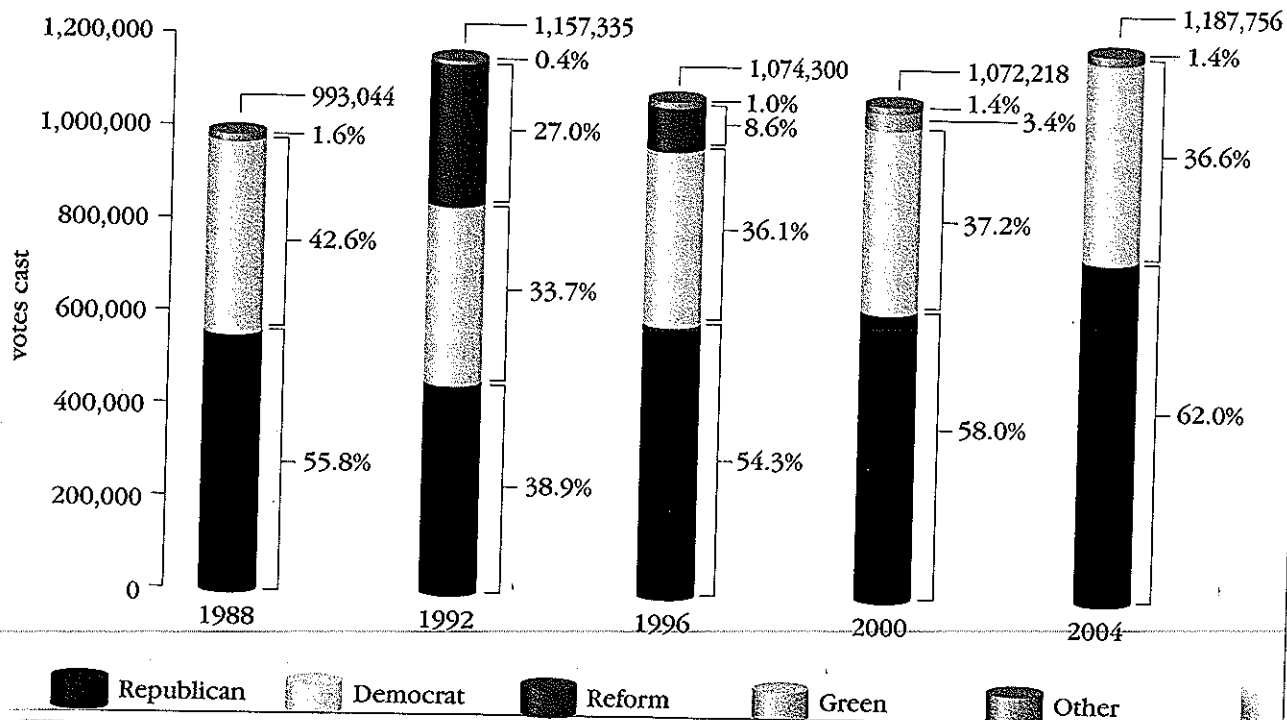
Electoral college votes (2008): 6

primary competitors. Democrats are so scarce in the state that competition between primary contenders is likely only in metropolitan districts and larger local governments.

Kansas conducts caucuses to nominate presidential candidates, but for state elections, Kansas employs closed primaries in which the voter's choices are limited to declared candidates of the selected party or write-in candidates. Republicans consistently make up around 45 percent of registered voters, while Democrats, who had made up almost 30 percent of registered voters in the early 1990s, have seen erosion to a level of about 26

KANSAS

KANSAS: PARTISAN DISTRIBUTION OF PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION RESULTS, 1988-2004



Note: Percents may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

percent. There is no significant third party in the state, although Ross Perot did very well in Kansas in 1992, winning 27 percent of the vote.

The split in the Republican Party is evident in issues that come to the fore in elections. The social conservatives focus their most intense rhetoric on pro-life and pro-death penalty issues, as well as the aggressive expansion of citizens' rights to carry concealed firearms. They have also advanced a nativist agenda, advocating English as the official language and condemning the accommodation of illegal aliens. Moderate Republicans tend to pay little heed to these social agenda issues and focus much more on reducing taxation, promoting economic development, and making Kansas business-friendly.

Legislative politics are fascinating as a result of the Kansas electoral process and the partisan divides. Since the 1970s, Kansas governors, whether Democrat or Republican, have been moderates, while legislative power has oscillated between the conservative wing of the Republican party and a tacit, seldom acknowledged coalition of moderate Republicans and Democrats. In the latter case, the legislative leadership is ostensibly Republican but critically dependent on Democratic votes to succeed in moving legislation forward.

Many Kansas interest groups, with the exception of those addressing public education or taxation, are seldom heard from in the election process. Because of the close relationship among legislators, active constituents, and economic interests, the state's interest groups tend to be very evenhanded in spreading campaign donations, with the caveat that the bulk of resources flow to incumbents. During the opening years of the 21st century, interest-group activity was focused on the Indian gaming issue and the abortion issue, but these interest groups do not represent what would be considered sustaining and long-term influences on the electoral process.

The Legislative Branch

The Kansas legislature is composed of 40 senators and 125 representatives. Senators serve four-year terms and representatives serve two-year terms.

The legislature convenes on the second Monday in January every year and is limited to a 90-calendar-

THE LEGISLATIVE BRANCH



Time commitment: Part-time

Term lengths: 2-year house terms; 4-year senate terms

Term limits: No

Size

House: 125 seats

Senate: 40 seats

Women in legislature (2008): 29.1%

day session in even-numbered years (which can be extended by a two-thirds vote of both houses) but is unlimited in odd-numbered years (the longest session was 107 days in 2002). Legislators may call a special session by petition to the governor, if approved by two-thirds of both houses.

The Kansas legislature is a part-time; "citizen legislature." While this term often denotes domination from the business, agriculture, or legal communities, the legislature has developed some diversity among the occupations represented. According to the state's *Legislative Directory*, almost 6 percent of the legislature are teachers and—in a relatively recent development—the number of retired individuals has increased to 15 percent, exceeding the 10 percent who are attorneys. Women make up 29 percent of the legislature, but only 1.8 percent of the legislature are Hispanics and 4.2 percent are African Americans, both far below these groups' percentage of the statewide population.

Republicans have long dominated the state legislature. Indeed, Democrats have won both houses of the state legislature only once in the state's history (in 1913–1915). Further, the Democrats have controlled the state senate only once and the state house of representatives only three times (1913–1915, 1977–1979, and 1991–1993). In 2007 the Republicans held 75 percent of the seats in the senate and 62 percent of the seats in the house.

The Republican domination of the legislature was traditionally accompanied by a rural-urban split, which evolved in the late 1900s into a split between the moderate and social conservative wings of the Republican Party, the latter dominated by rural Republicans, with some support from pockets of voters in the Kansas City area and Wichita. Thus, in 2007 the speaker of the house was a social

conservative, rural Republican, who was elected to his position by uniting the social conservative votes, both rural and urban, in the house.

Legislative turnover is quite high. As reported by Tim Carpenter in the *Topeka Capital-Journal*, of the 165 house and senate members holding office in 1996, only 24 representatives and 4 senators continued to hold office in 2007. This turnover extends to the leadership, where custom dictates that the speaker of the house and the president of the senate serve only two terms. As a rule, legislative turnover is caused by family or business pressures, burnout, illness, and even death, rather than electoral defeat. While Kansas has many politically safe districts, they are safe not only because of partisan loyalties but also because of personal loyalties to legislators who walk their district during elections and stay in touch with constituents through attendance at local meetings. As a result, at most there may be three or four highly contested legislative races in a typical election year. Most often, the only political contest is in the primary election, not the general election.

The loci of power in the legislature rests with the party leadership, starting with the speaker of the house and the president of the senate. The speaker appoints all members of the standing committees and selects (and can remove) the chairs of these committees. The power of the president of the senate is a bit more diluted. As outlined by the Kansas Legislative Research Department, senate committee members and chairs are selected by the Committee on Organization, Calendar, and Rules, a nine-member committee that includes the senate president (chair), vice president, majority leader, and six majority party members (who are selected by the party caucus and will become chairs of key committees). Seniority is not a major factor in either chamber in making committee appointments or selecting chairs, but loyalty to the leadership and shared policy values are important factors.

The power of the presiding officers and the leaders of the majority party to appoint all members of committees should, in theory, reinforce party governance. But while party leadership is certainly influential and, at times, very persuasive, there are two factors that limit the leadership. First, all bills referred to a committee are reported

out, regardless of the leadership's wishes. Second, many of the bills are not partisan in nature. The party leadership supplements its authority and the authority of the chairs through the active use of the party caucus, which meets daily during the legislative session. Caucus meetings have been known to be lively, with the leaders trying to direct the proceedings and push their agendas through, while the opinionated rank-and-file membership articulate their own views. The result of this process is often a compromise. These caucus meetings are generally open, but the rules of both chambers permit closed meetings.

The Kansas legislature could not remain an effective "citizens legislature" if it did not possess the resources to be a somewhat equal counterweight to the executive, particularly the ability of individual legislators to author legislation. At the heart of the system is the Legislative Coordinating Council (LCC, founded in 1933), which is made up of the president of the senate, the speaker of the house, the speaker pro tem, and the majority and minority leaders of both houses. Among the council's functions are to assign specified policy issues to interim committees and appoint the members of those committees that will meet during the summer, hold hearings, and develop bills that will be prefiled for the next legislative session. The LCC is also supervisor for four legislative staff agencies: the Kansas Legislative Research Department, the Kansas Revisor of Statutes, the Kansas Legislative Administrative Services Division, and the Kansas Legislative Counsel. As supervisor of these agencies, the LCC ensures: (1) that each legislator has the ability to receive politically neutral information without relying on executive agencies or interest groups; (2) that each legislator has the ability to author bills and amendments without needing any expertise in using the state code; and (3) that each legislator has secretarial and legal assistance.

Lacking a statewide initiative or direct referendum, Kansas state policymaking is dominated by the governor and the legislature. The relative ascendancy of each branch depends upon the issues involved, partisan balance, and the personalities of the participants. One unique procedure of the Kansas legislature directly impacts the governor's veto power. Each year the legislature recesses (but

does not adjourn) for about two and one-half weeks a few days before the scheduled end of the session. After the recess, the legislature returns for a "veto session" at which it considers overriding any bills the governor vetoed. After completing that work, the legislature recesses again for about two weeks. If no further action is needed, the legislature returns for a short session to adjourn *sine die*. By returning for a veto session, the legislature prevents the governor from exercising a pocket veto and forces the governor to either take action on bills or let them become law without a signature.

The Executive Branch

The central political figure in Kansas is the governor, who has the line-item veto; can call legislative special sessions; appoint hundreds of commission, board, and administrative officials; and has a 15-member cabinet that oversees the workings of the state government. The Kansas chief executive also submits a budget proposal every year to the legislature, and therefore sets the fiscal agenda. Before 1972, governors were elected to two-year terms, with no term limits. The state constitution was then amended, and governors now serve a maximum of two consecutive four-year terms. Several former governors have tried to gain election again after serving their two terms and sitting out an election cycle, but none have been successful.

Within the executive branch, the governor's power is limited by four offices that are elected and have duties and powers independent of the governor: the secretary of state, attorney general,

state treasurer, and insurance commissioner. These offices can limit the governor's power politically because, while it is common to have a Democratic governor, Republicans generally have a much easier time winning these offices. The norm is to have at most one Democrat in these four offices at any one time.

Kansas is one of the few states in which the lieutenant governor runs on the same ticket with the governor during both the primary and general elections. Traditionally, the lieutenant governor position has been rather insignificant, but in the 2006 gubernatorial election the lieutenant governor spot became a political lightning rod. In that election, the Democrat incumbent, Governor Kathleen Sebelius, chose the former Kansas GOP chair Mark Parkinson to be her running mate. The choice had two purposes: to help draw moderate Republican votes for Sebelius, and to groom a candidate for the Democratic Party to run when Sebelius's term expires in 2010. With great fanfare, Parkinson switched parties, and he was given significant duties in the economic development realm of the Sebelius administration.

Between 1957 and 2007, Kansas governors came from both parties—with five Democrats and five Republicans holding office during this period. Interestingly, in this Republican state, Democrats held the governor's chair for more years than Republicans over this 50-year period. Kansas governors tend to be consensus builders who are popular with the broad middle of the political spectrum, emphasizing coalition politics and the wide public interest. The Democrat Kathleen Sebelius, who was elected in 2002 and re-elected by almost 60 percent of the vote in 2006, and the Republican Bill Graves, who was elected in 1994 and re-elected by a wide margin in 1998, are reflective of this phenomenon. Both steered clear of the contentious political wars involving conservative social issues, such as abortion and gay marriage, and focused their efforts on economic development, tax cuts, and education issues.

In order to win and stay in office, Democratic governors have usually been more fiscally conservative than their Republican counterparts. Because of the moderate nature of the state's governors, vetoes are almost always upheld by coalitions of

THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH



Governor length of term: 4 years

Governor term limits: 2

Governors (1990 to 2008)

Mike Hayden (R), 1987–1991

Joan Finney (D), 1991–1995

Bill Graves (R), 1995–2001

Kathleen Sebelius (D), 2001

Other elected statewide positions: Lieutenant governor (runs with governor as team), secretary of state, attorney general (constitutional), insurance commissioner, treasurer (statutory)

Size of bureaucracy (2006): 38,738

Democrats and moderate Republicans in the legislature. For example, Governor Sebelius vetoed 221 bills in 2006 and had only one overridden (a veto of a bill allowing for the concealed carrying of handguns). The one exception was Governor Joan Finney, Kansas's first woman governor (1991–1995), whose contentious personal relationship with the legislature resulted in the legislature overriding 13 of her 27 vetoes in 1992.

Kansans don't elect political newcomers to the governorship, and the traditional path to the governorship has been via the legislature, although a recent trend has been to run for governor from the platform of one of the other statewide offices. Of the 10 governors between 1957 and 2007, six served in the legislature. However, the three most recent governors on this list were statewide officeholders before becoming governor: Sebelius was insurance commissioner, Bill Graves was secretary of state, and Joan Finney was state treasurer.

The Judicial Branch

The Kansas judicial branch consists of a supreme court, an intermediate appellate court, district courts that are the general jurisdiction trial courts, and municipal courts. The 105 counties of Kansas are organized into 31 judicial districts, and each county has a district court, with some counties having magistrate judges. The municipal courts hear only cases arising from city ordinances. There are no other limited jurisdiction courts in Kansas.

The supreme court has general supervisory authority over the Kansas court system, but the day-to-day supervision comes from the Kansas Judicial Center and the chief judges of the 31 judicial districts. The supreme court consists of seven justices and has limited original jurisdiction involving exceptional writs (mandamus and habeas corpus). It is mandated to hear direct appeals from district courts involving certain major felonies, as well as cases where an individual has been convicted under a statute that has been declared unconstitutional. All other appeals are discretionary.

The court of appeals has 12 judges and may hear cases *En banc*, though it typically hears cases in panels of three. It has original jurisdiction in habeas corpus petitions but otherwise

THE JUDICIAL BRANCH



Types of courts: State supreme court, court of appeals, district courts (there are 31 judicial districts, but each of 105 counties has a district court), municipal courts

Method of selecting judges: Appointment by Missouri Plan, in which the governor picks from one of three names nominated by an appointed commission, followed by a retention election every six years (state supreme court and court of appeals); partisan elections and appointment by Missouri Plan, in which the method is decided by a district-wide election (district courts).

Intermediate appellate court members: 12

Supreme court

Number of members: 7

Term: 6 years

hears appeals from the district courts (except those appealed directly to the supreme court). It also reviews challenges to orders issued by the Kansas Corporation Commission (in some states this is the utility commission). The court of appeals travels around the state, regularly scheduling sessions in six other cities besides the capital of Topeka. The district courts have general jurisdiction over all criminal and civil cases; they hear cases from municipal court on appeal and review administrative actions.

All appellate court judges are selected by the Missouri Plan with a nominating commission submitting the names of three candidates to the governor. After a year in office, judges are subjected to a retention election, and they must face subsequent retention elections at the end of their terms. Supreme court justices serve six-year terms, while intermediate appellate court judges serve four-year terms. District court judges are selected in one of two ways: by merit selection (similar to appellate court judges) or by partisan election. The method of selection is determined by a district-wide election. District court judges serve four-year terms.

The Kansas court system appears to be efficient. For a state with almost three million people, it had a half-million cases filed in district courts in

fiscal year 2004-2005, and only 24 percent of these were pending at the end of the fiscal year, with the pending cases split evenly between criminal and civil cases, according to statistical reports from the Kansas judicial branch. The Kansas courts are not known for judicial activism, but they did cause some controversy in the opening years of the 21st century in the area of school finance. In 2003, several school districts sued the state, alleging that legislative spending levels for the schools violated the Kansas Constitution. A district court judge ultimately agreed with the plaintiffs, and the Supreme Court affirmed, in *Montoy v. State* (2005), compelling the legislature to increase funding in the next legislative session, which it did.

Intergovernmental Relations

Kansas embraces the virtues of low taxes and small government, and it disdains the eastern establishment and its "elites." Yet the people and government of Kansas are deeply interlinked with the federal government. According to the Governor's budget report, about 25 percent of the state's total budget of \$12 billion for fiscal year 2007 derived from federal sources, with the greatest share, \$1.7 billion, going to health-care concerns. Although very little land in Kansas is owned by the federal government, two vitally important elements of the U.S. Army are located in the state. The general staff college of the U.S. Army, along with a primary military penal facility and a large federal corrections facility, is located at Fort Leavenworth in the northeastern corner of the state. A hundred miles west is Fort Riley, home of the U.S. Army's First Infantry Division and assorted other units. McConnell Air Force Base, in Wichita, houses one of the U.S. Air Force's three air refueling wings.

Interstate politics are also important in Kansas, although these are of a somewhat more mixed quality. An interstate tax compact exists between Kansas and Missouri governing the complex and large economic exchange that goes on in the Kansas City metropolitan area. To the north and west, Nebraska and Colorado have had somewhat more difficult relations with Kansas, primarily with regard to the use of riparian rights in the Republican and Arkansas rivers, respectively.

Finally, relations between the state government of Kansas and its political subdivisions are, at best, tension laden. Cities of the first class (essentially, over 15,000 population) are empowered to practice home rule, but Dillon's Rule (which states that local governments are creatures of the state and can perform only those functions that are specifically authorized by the state legislature) is still very much in practice in the state. This means that the suburban forces opposed to annexation, property taxes, and eminent domain regularly get a second chance in the state legislature whenever municipalities take a notion to flex their political muscle.

In December 2005, in an effort to overcome the revenue and services balkanization that was taking place in and around Topeka, a city-county unification was proposed, but the legislature's response effectively quashed the effort. In establishing the special legislation to authorize the unification, the legislature set a voting criteria that required the consent of separate majorities in the city and the surrounding rural areas of the county, effectively dooming the effort before it began.

In the post-World War II era, the state regularly allocated an annual fund transfer from the state general fund to municipalities to provide a form of general revenue sharing. In the late 1990s the state-to-local revenue transfer was deinstitutionalized. The state legislature also sharply limits local taxing authority, primarily by limiting local-option sales taxes and managing the property tax valuation and tax rate systems.

State-Tribal Relations

Kansas has 22 American Indian communities, including larger established reservations such as the Sauk and Fox Reservation, the Potawatomi Reservation north of Topeka, and the unique Haskell Indian Nations University in Lawrence. The tribes have semisovereign status under the Indian Reorganization Act of June 18, 1934, giving them a somewhat greater degree of independence from state and national authorities than municipalities have.

From the early 1990s to 2006, the Kansas courts adjudicated some contentious issues of sovereignty, arising mainly as jurisdiction and

authority disputes between authorities of the State of Kansas, particularly the attorney general, and the tribes. Decisions in favor of tribal independence from state authority have included the rights to establish casinos, avoid gasoline taxes, issue motor-vehicle license plates, and administer and collect taxes on the reservations. The tribes lost the right to sell fireworks year-round. The northern reservations have operated casinos since the early 1990s, providing the reservations with a very large revenue source. The tribes have used this money to improve health care, community development, social services, preschool education programs, and community facilities. There are no rigorous, independent empirical analyses of whether American Indian casinos have added costs or provided benefits to the state.

Long-term Issues and Policy Trends

Kansas is an agricultural state, although among its principle natural resources are oil and natural gas. As a consequence, many of the state's enduring issues have revolved around agriculture and natural resources, with the state embracing such policy considerations as water rights, ethyl alcohol-labeling, wildlife and parks, grain warehouse inspections, ground water management, corporate farming law, and aid to farmers—to mention only the most important policy concerns. Corporate farming has become a big economic player in Kansas, especially with respect to

turkey and hog farms. These economic entities have impacted both the Kansas landscape and the state's environment. While they have contributed to the economic wellness of the state, there have been environmental consequences to the land and air, especially from animal waste and chemical pollution seeping into the underground water supplies and the Kansas River. Lawmakers have attempted to address these concerns through environmental loan and tax incentives.

Economic development and taxes are also ongoing issues. The tax base of Kansas is modest at best. Over the years it has always been a challenge to provide tax equity, satisfy the desire to reduce property taxes, maintain a fair and responsible sales tax, attract businesses to the state through tax incentives and enhancements, and fund public education. There is no reason to believe the population is going to grow significantly over the short term, so the enduring need to find ways to tax and spend in an equitable and adequate manner is a continuing policy challenge. Low taxes remain a key goal of the Republican Party, but that goal will continue to be in conflict with the belief that well-funded universities and schools are not only important but also can spur economic development. One policy trend has been to provide tax incentives to rural businesses and family farmers for the purchase of equipment and the investment in new technologies. This has also been coupled

EDUCATION FUNDING

Educational funding has been an issue in Kansas for a number of years. What has come to be known as "funding equity" and "funding adequacy" constitute the essence of this issue. Funding equity involves the distribution of state monies among the 324 school districts. Funding adequacy involves the amount of money each public school needs to provide an "adequate" education, as stipulated in the Kansas Constitution. The legislature has been challenged to resolve the disparity between equity and adequacy.

It is no exaggeration to note that in some areas of the state one mil (one-tenth of one cent applied to an assessed valuation) of property tax

will generate \$10,000 in revenue, while in some districts on the eastern border a mil generates \$3 million. Thus, some schools in eastern Kansas benefited greatly from small, local mil-levy increases. On June 3, 2005, the State Supreme Court ordered the legislature to increase school funding by \$285 million by July 1, 2005. After the court's ruling the legislature met in special session and provided an additional \$148 million, for a total increase in school funding of \$289 million, \$4 million more than the court ordered. In all probability, the challenge of school funding will continue for years to come, especially as the cost of public education continues to increase.

with legislative efforts to draw businesses—especially energy and agribusinesses—to western Kansas using tax breaks and economic development money.

With the increasing disparity between the dense populations and rich taxbase of the Kansas City area, which since 2000 has exploded in growth, tourism, and new business, and western and central Kansas, which has seen decreasing populations and economic hard times over this same time period, the emergence of “two Kansases” has become a central issue that touches upon all policy decisions in the state, particularly education funding, tax rates, and economic development initiatives. In terms of education funding, policy trends have included vastly increased K-12 spending (albeit at the pushing of the Kansas Supreme Court). In terms of taxes, the trend has been to cut taxes or keep them low, with special tax breaks and economic development initiatives for rural Kansas businesses. There is great hope that alternative energy will be a boon to rural Kansas and provide a way for Kansas farmers and entrepreneurs to capture a new niche in the national economy. Two recent policy trends—rural economic investment packages and the focus on alternative energy—clashed in 2007 when the secretary of the Kansas Department of Health and Environment denied a permit for a multibillion-dollar coal-fired power plant that would have been built in western Kansas.

—Bob Beatty, Steve Cann, David Freeman,
Chris Hamilton, Mark Peterson, and Loran Smith

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