



KHA's Current Report
December 6, 2024

President's Perspective – Politics and the Weather

There is a saying associated with Kansas as early as 1918, when a newspaper in Mankato, Kansas, wrote, "If you don't like the Kansas weather today, just wait a day and probably tomorrow will suit." The world of politics is not much different from the shifts we see in the weather. In just the last few weeks, Kansas has seen snowy conditions in the west, sunny skies with fall-like temperatures across the central plains and strong winds with tornado risks. Whether you prefer the sunny weather or your Kansas community needs to see some rain, post-election could be joy for you or a time of stormy skies. But do not worry, like everything, nothing lasts long.

The Kansas electorate that just two years ago re-elected Laura Kelly by more than two percentage points has swung back to add to the Republican supermajorities previously serving in the Kansas House of Representatives and Senate. With Republicans adding two in the House and three in the Senate, the new splits will be 88 Republicans and 37 Democrats in the Kansas House and 31 Republicans and nine Democrats in the Senate. The supermajorities, like our Kansas skies, are closely monitored, as it takes supermajorities to pass both constitutional provisions and override a governor's veto.

It's true that while climates of partisanship may sometimes feel unsettling, some things in the political landscape perpetually stay the same. That is true of the advocacy work we do with our membership at the Kansas Hospital Association. No matter the current climate, we remain steadfast in our commitment to work with policymakers and elected officials from all backgrounds and political persuasions to ensure our state has the critical health care needed when it counts the most.

With more than 30 new faces in the state House and Senate, members met this week to hold the first legislative action of the 2025 session by electing leadership. For the most part, leadership in the Kansas House did not change. The chamber will again be led by Speaker Dan Hawkins (R-Wichita), Majority Leader Chris Croft (R-Overland Park) and Speaker Pro Tempore Blake Carpenter (R-Wichita). However, the chamber did choose a new Democrat Minority Leader, Rep. Brandon Woodard (R-Lenexa). On the Senate side, the Republican caucus re-elected Ty Masterson (R-Andover) as Senate president but chose a new majority leader in Sen. Chase Blasi (R-Wichita) and Vice President Sen. Tim Shallenburger (R-Baxter Springs). The Democratic party re-elected their caucus leadership, which will be led by Sen. Dinah Sykes (D-Lenexa).

No matter who represents our communities in the Kansas statehouse, hospitals continue to face challenges that sometimes feel like the Kansas headwinds. In 2025, our advocacy work will likely focus on three main areas: finance, workforce and ensuring that Kansans have access to the proper care at the right time.

We are looking forward to the start of the new legislative session on Jan. 13. I want to personally invite KHA member hospitals to bring their leadership team, staff and board members to Topeka for the [Annual KHA Advocacy Day](#), on Jan. 23. This is an excellent opportunity to discuss the needs of your hospital with our state elected officials and celebrate our advocacy work as our 2024 Advocacy All Stars graduates are recognized. We invite you to [register](#) for this special [KHA Advocacy Day](#) event. See the related article on our Advocacy All-Stars.

In the end, I hope to have you join us in tracking the temperatures, watching the skies, closely monitoring your rain gauge and making the most of our advocacy adventures in 2025, regardless of the direction of the political winds. Please know that no matter how much the political atmosphere may change, we at KHA will always work on your behalf. Hope to see you in January.
--Chad Austin

Advocacy All-Stars Recognized at Advocacy Day

In Kansans, some things stand the test of time. When our neighbors are struggling, we come together to do the work that needs to be done. At the Kansas Hospital Association, we continue to build on our strength as a membership organization by engaging hospital frontline staff in the advocacy topics that impact them most. That is why I'm proud to, for the second year, be celebrating our new Advocacy All-Star class that spent two days this fall with our KHA staff learning the behind-the-scenes work and what it takes to weather the storm for policy changes in Topeka. Please join me in congratulating our Advocacy All-Stars, including:

- Heather Aylward, Newman Regional Health, Emporia
- Sara Boyd, Memorial Health System, Abilene
- Chris Buesing, Stormont Vail Health, Topeka
- Jeremy Clingenpeel, Cheyenne County Hospital, Saint Francis
- Benjamin Fuentes, Satanta District Hospital, Clinics, and LTCU, Satanta
- ReChelle Horinek, Norton County Hospital, Norton
- Sarah Hoy, Coffeyville Regional Medical Center, Coffeyville
- Jayna Kelly, Wamego Health Center, Wamego
- Christina Lawrenz, LMH Health, Lawrence
- Jamie Lopez, NMC Health, Newton
- Robert Mangold, Logan County Health Services, Oakley
- Mary Martell, Stormont Vail Health, Topeka
- Jenny Niblock, Citizens Health, Colby
- Aubrey Nuss, Rice Community Health, Lyons
- Crystal Pratt, Ascension Via Christi Hospital Manhattan, Inc., Manhattan
- Shara Ragan, AdventHealth Shawnee Mission, Shawnee Mission
- Becky Randall, Greenwood County Hospital, Eureka

- Dara Reese, McPherson Hospital, Inc., McPherson
- Paul Shiffrel, Citizens Health, Colby
- Jessica Turner, Susan B. Allen Memorial Hospital, El Dorado

Our 2024 Advocacy All-Stars graduates will be recognized at the KHA Advocacy Day on Jan. 23. We invite you to register for this special KHA Advocacy Day.

[Click to Register](#)

--Chad Austin

Excellence in Workforce Strategies – Shared Nursing Governance Group Addresses Culture, Education and Patient Safety

Strategies that address workforce recruitment and retention are essential to providing optimal health in Kansas. The Workforce Strategies Award recognizes a team of employees, providers or volunteers who have significantly contributed to the well-being, retention or recruitment of health care workers at their facility.



Ascension Via Christi Manhattan's Nursing Shared Governance group started in May 2023 to recognize challenges and barriers within the hospital that are harmful to patient care and/or hospital culture. The group worked together across nursing disciplines to find evidence-based practices to solve challenges. The group emphasized patient safety, as the hospital has a CMS four-star rating and an "A" rating from Leapfrog.

The NSG offered bedside nurses a formal platform to make positive changes that impacted direct patient care. Frontline nurses were allowed to take ownership and accountability for recurrent challenges.

One of these critical programs has been to form a robust Preceptor Program. NSG collaborated with Clinical Professional Development to utilize a self-paced online learning tool with an interactive session. This gives preceptors consistency during the onboarding process and offers a holistic experience to new hires.

Charge nurses were another group of associates needing additional resources to ensure success in their roles. NSG collaborated with Clinical Professional Development to offer a Charge Nurse Education Seminar. This education focused on conflict management, compassion fatigue, safety huddles, emotional intelligence, leadership skills, patient experience and other important qualities for the charge nurse role.

Another big win for the NSG was the formation of A Ticket to Ride. This program improved patient care by enhancing the inconsistent handoff process. The Ticket to Ride form includes all the pertinent information about the patient, and it stays with the patient while the patient travels to/from various areas of the hospital.

"As a result of the group's initiative, there has been a noticeable change in teamwork, camaraderie and empowerment of our team members to improve work culture. We have been able to implement some really wonderful programs that enhance employee satisfaction, education and patient care," said Tanya Brabender, director of clinical operations.

--*Shelby Stacy*

Communications Resources Available in Box.com

Do you need a template or sample text for a critical issue? Do you have social media channels to fill? The Kansas Hospital Association creates member content for various topics and health observances. You can find the content in the [KHA Communications folder](#) on Box.com. You will find template articles, posters, presentations and opinion editorials. Feel free to customize these to your needs or drop in your logo. There also are graphics and messaging for social media. Please download and share as appropriate. You also can use the Society for Health Care Strategy and Market Development's [health observance calendar](#) as a tool for your external communications and social media campaigns.

--*Cindy Samuelson*

Financial Webinar: Price Transparency: Regulations, Legislation and Compliance – Dec. 10

Join us at noon on Dec. 10 for a financial webinar. Kathy Reep, PYA, will examine the new requirements for hospital price transparency and some of the providers' key concerns regarding the current regulations. She will also discuss the status of federal legislation related to price transparency and recent provider compliance reports from third parties and government agencies.



--*Jennifer Findley*

Webinar on BCBS Providers Class Action Settlement Dec. 11

The Blue Cross Blue Shield Providers Class Action Settlement resolves the allegations that BCBSA and Individual Blue Plans violated antitrust laws by illegally dividing the United States into "service areas" and agreeing not to compete with each other in those areas. The plaintiffs also claim to settle the defendant's fixed prices for services provided. The Court has not decided who is right or wrong. Instead, plaintiffs and settling defendants agreed to a \$2.8 billion settlement to avoid the risk and cost of further litigation. What does this mean for Kansas hospitals?

The Kansas Health Service Corporation has partnered with Class Action Capital for six years to assist Kansas Hospital Association members with cases like this. KHSC is hosting a webinar at 10:00 a.m. on Wednesday, Dec. 11. Joshua Kerstein, CAC's director of business development, will discuss the landmark \$2.8 billion Blue Cross Blue Shield Providers Class Action settlement, claims process, and how this class action can affect your organization. This webinar will instruct hospitals to determine whether to join the class settlement or consider working independently. Class Action Capital can be of assistance no matter the hospital's decision.

[Click to Register](#)

-Steve Poage

Federal and National News

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services [released](#) a proposed [rule](#) to "hold Medicare Advantage and Part D plans more accountable for delivering high-quality coverage so that people with Medicare are connected to the care they need when they need it."

CMS [proposes](#) to permit coverage of anti-obesity medications and enhance Medicare Advantage prior authorization and utilization management guardrails. The proposed guardrails include the following:

- Refining the definition of internal coverage criteria
- Changing the reopening rules to eliminate the discretion of a Medicare Advantage organization to reopen an approved authorization for an inpatient hospital admission
- Using artificial intelligence
- Requiring Medicare Advantage organizations to make a provider directory available to CMS for inclusion in the Medicare Plan Finder online tool
- Ensuring equitable access to behavioral health benefits

CMS will accept comments about the proposed rule until 4 p.m., Monday, Jan. 27, 2025.

CMS Finalizes New Model to Improve Access to Kidney Transplants

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services [released](#) a final [rule](#) establishing a new, six-year mandatory model to increase access to kidney transplants while improving the quality of care for people seeking kidney transplants.

The [Increasing Organ Transplant Access Model](#) participants will now have a financial incentive to perform more transplants. Participating transplant hospitals will be encouraged to identify their underserved populations and address gaps in care for donors and transplant recipients.

MLN Connects Provider eNews Available

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services issued the following [updates](#) to *MLN Connects Provider eNews*:

- [Clinical Laboratory Fee Schedule: CY 2025 Final Payment Determinations](#)
- [CMS Roundup \(Nov. 29, 2024\)](#)
- [Advanced Primary Care Management Services: Get Information about Billing Medicare](#)
- [Flu Shots: There's Still Time to Protect Your Patients](#)