

LEGISLATIVE REPORT

KDHA Kansas Special Session Update November 22, 2021

For the 25th time in state history, the Legislature convened a special session to consider a response to four COVID-19 mandates issued by President Biden in September. Though special sessions are not uncommon, this was the first called by petition of the members of the House and Senate.

The session was convened on the morning of November 22 to review proposed legislation developed by a special committee earlier this month. After several hours of debate and a short conference committee, the Senate and House agreed to a compromise bill that is heading to Governor Kelly's desk. The final measure, contained in Special Session House Bill 2001, was approved 24-11 by the Senate and 77-34 by the House. The votes were largely along partisan lines, with some exceptions, but Governor Kelly is reported to plan to sign the bill into law when it reaches her desk. The special session lasted just fourteen hours.

HB 2001 effectively provides several exemptions and employee protections in response to the federal vaccine mandates. Specifically, an exemption is given to employees with a signed medical reason or religious belief. The bill allows an employee to file a complaint alleging violations to the Department of Labor and the Department must investigate within 60 days. Additionally, individuals terminated or unable to work because of their vaccination status become eligible for unemployment benefits.

The Legislature is just weeks away from the start of the 2022 session, which begins on January 10.

Thank you and please let us know if you have any questions.

Travis Lowe