

Kansas: A Retro Approach to Lawmaking

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Introduction

Among the fifty state legislatures, Kansas's might be termed a retro approach to governing. The state lacks the petition initiative, and therefore it also lacks many of the complicating factors that have changed governance in many other U.S. states. Kansas has no citizen-initiated tax cap such as California's Proposition 13, Colorado's Taxpayer Bill of Rights, or Missouri's Hancock Amendment. Furthermore, the state still maintains a citizen legislature with low pay, limited staff, and short sessions. And finally, Kansas does not have term limits on its legislators. The legislative process in Kansas has changed recently to accommodate a more-complex government, a changing political climate, and the advent of new information technology. But overall, Kansas's Legislature has not changed radically in its functioning during the past ten years.

Kansas is unlikely to have legislative term limits anytime in the foreseeable future. Because the Sunflower State lacks the petition initiative, the only way to pass such a policy in the state would be for the legislators themselves to send voters a constitutional amendment limiting their own terms—an unlikely prospect, especially given the near-universal disdain for term limits expressed by legislators during our interviews. Some legislators have indeed sponsored term limit bills in the last ten years, but such proposals never survived the legislative process.

Five dominant themes that emerged from our research in Topeka. The first is that the state's politics are driven by the "three party state" dynamic: the dominant Republican party is deeply split into warring moderate and conservative factions, leaving no single faction (including minority Democrats) with enough votes to pass legislation without building coalitions. The GOP split also leads to high leadership turnover. The

second theme was that Kansas does, indeed, have a sort of informal term limit on legislators: low pay. The poor compensation boosts turnover to levels approaching the rates in term-limit states, particularly in the Senate. One legislator summed it up bluntly, saying: “We do have term limits in Kansas. It’s called legislative pay!” The third theme is that with high legislative and low staff turnover, centralized, nonpartisan staff are the primary storehouses of institutional knowledge. The fourth theme is that the committee system in the Kansas Legislature generally works well at screening bills before they reach the floor. The fifth and final theme is that the dominant change in composition is due to demographic shifts and redistricting: rural communities are losing seats and power to their counterparts in the fast-growing suburbs. However, the state’s lack of term limits has allowed certain rural areas, particularly western Kansas, to re-elect longtime legislators who rise to committee leadership positions and mitigate the loss of power that accompanies population decline.

Composition

Most elections for Kansas statehouse are non-competitive. The redistricting process is handled by regular legislation, allowing the majority to draw maps to their advantage. However, the “three party state” dynamic has affected this process, particularly in the Senate, where a coalition of Senate conservatives and Democrats were able to replace the leadership-approved map with their own, using floor amendments in 2002.

Kansas is a small state, with fewer than three million residents. Furthermore, the legislative chambers are relatively large at 125 House seats and 40 Senate seats. The result is that the districts have modest populations, and the cost of an election campaign

in Kansas is still relatively low, though some legislators noted that the cost has increased in recent years. Most leaders we interviewed tended to downplay fundraising as a central part of their jobs. Several members and staffers noted that the vast majority of turnover is due to retirements, not the defeat of incumbents in elections.

Like many states, Kansas has seen more women legislators in recent years. However, informed observers could not trace any significant changes in the lawmaking process to this dynamic. One lobbyist did note that his firm now insists upon hiring both women and men as lobbyists, however, he added that a lobbyist's rapport with a given legislator is usually based on the agreement of personalities, not gender. One staffer noted that Kansas has long been a relatively progressive state when it comes to empowering women. She even found evidence for this in the murals decorating the capitol—artwork depicting strong Kansas women such as aviator Amelia Earhart, not just women in classical Greek and Roman costumes who were “half naked.”

There tend to be just a few racial minorities in the legislature. This reflects two factors: first, the state's relatively homogenous population, and second, the fact that the minority population in Kansas tends to be concentrated in just a few urban areas. There is now significant immigration into rural Kansas, particularly from Mexico, but it has not yet resulted in minority legislators being elected from those communities.

Republicans outnumber Democrats by a large margin in both houses. On paper, Republican strength appears to have grown over the ten years studied. However, the numbers exaggerate the extent of Republican domination because they do not account for the moderate-conservative split within the Republican caucus which creates “three party state” dynamic. The majority caucus also splits apart over urban vs. rural issues. The

minority Democrats told us that their own party was far more unified than the majority, allowing them to make coalitions with defecting Republicans. However, some Republican leaders disagreed, arguing that the Democrats, too, have internal feuds that can affect the legislative process. However, the Democrats have no obvious cleavage like the GOP's moderate-conservative split.

Kansas has high turnover for a non-term-limit state, particularly in the Senate. Among our interviewees, the opinion was nearly universal in fingering low pay as the culprit. Kansas legislators' base pay is about \$21,000 per session, and many legislators spend most of this on expenses related to maintaining a home in the capitol during the session. Furthermore, the only means to raise the pay is for the legislature itself to do so—then face the wrath of constituents in the next election (Topeka Capital-Journal Online, March 9, 2001). One Senate leader noted that candidates must be recruited from among those with time to spare, along with either few family responsibilities, or a great deal of financial security—the retired, those just out of college or graduate school, and those in professions that allow one to be away from work for long periods during certain seasons, such as farmers and attorneys. A staffer noted that there are few legislators age 30-45—that is, few who leave their other professions during prime earning years to serve in the legislature. Surprisingly, a Senate leader told us that it was just as easy to recruit candidates from districts a long drive away from Topeka as it is to find candidates from districts much closer. In sum, the problem is not so much candidate recruitment as it is retaining legislators—most leave after a few terms in office. This problem is most acute in the Senate (see Table 1 at the end of this manuscript).

Representation

Though it is not reflected in the data, our interviewees believed that a different change in composition, one lasting over more than the ten-year period for which we have data, is the most important one affecting policymaking. That is the shift from rural to suburban power. Johnson County, in suburban Kansas City, is the state's largest and by far the fastest-growing area in the state. Continued population growth assured Johnson County of several new House seats and a new Senate seat in the 2002 redistricting process. Knowledgeable observers also told us that Johnson County is the epicenter of the moderate-conservative Republican split that is driving state politics, and they argued that urban-rural disagreements are yet another source of factionalization, particularly over issues such as school funding and gun control. Western, southeastern, and northeastern Kansas are particularly hard-hit by the loss of population in rural communities. Redistricting is reflecting that, collapsing together districts in these parts of the state. Several longtime legislative leaders noted that western Kansans protect their political clout in the legislature by re-electing their legislators for many terms. They added that term limits would be very detrimental to rural Kansas, particularly the western part of the state, because they would force out these long-serving rural legislators. These observers noted that turnover tends to be higher among the urban delegations.

The Institution

The House and the Senate have very different approaches to leadership. The House empowers the Speaker to choose committee members (including chairs) from the majority party, while the Minority Leader chooses committee members from that caucus (including ranking minorities). The Senate, by contrast, uses a committee on committees

to make all assignments. That committee's appointees are all members of the majority party, though they request recommendations from the Minority Leader for minority-member committee appointments. According to one Senate leader, the Minority Leader's recommendations are accepted approximately 90% of the time, but the committee meets behind closed doors and their deliberations are not public.

One rank-and-file senator argued that the Senate President had less formal authority and was forced to use the "bully pulpit" to try to build power. The Senate leadership is further divided between the President and the Majority Leader, each of whom are elected separately from one another. In the House, the Speaker is considered to be the sole most powerful person in the body because of the committee assignments. Our interviewees overwhelmingly agreed on these points, particularly stressing the more powerful institutional position of the Speaker relative to the Senate President.

The "three party state" dynamic came into play here, as most of our interviewees stressed that Republican leaders spend a good deal of time trying to unify their caucus. They are not always successful. However, some argued that the recent election of a Democratic Governor served as a wake-up call to the Republicans to strive for unity and articulate policy alternatives to contrast with those from the executive.

Democratic leaders were surprisingly pleased with the rules of both chambers, arguing that the Republican moderate-conservative split has led to very minority-friendly rules on amending bills, getting roll-call votes, and so forth. Legislators and staffers from the Democratic caucus argued that their lawmakers must be very smart and effective on procedure in order to counter their small numbers and be effective. A Senate

leader noted that the minority-friendly rules lead to more floor amendments than would be the case if the majority were unified.

Ascension to leadership is not based on seniority. Candidates for leadership positions in both houses must build coalitions and line up votes. In recent years, votes for House Speaker have been close and required multiple ballots. There have also been contested elections for Senate President and both House and Senate Majority Leaders. Several legislators and observers told us that there is no longer an heir-apparent to leadership in either house. Elections for these positions are close and contested. The three-party dynamic again comes into play: the 2001-2002 House Majority Leader, a conservative, was challenged and defeated for re-election by a moderate, in the Republican primaries. Thus she lost not only her leadership position but her seat in the legislature, at the hands of a fellow Republican! In 2004, these two candidates squared off once again in the GOP primary: this time, the vanquished ex-Majority Leader reclaimed the seat.

The three-party state dynamic is visible on Table 4: Leadership Turnover. This turnover is consistently higher among Republicans than Democrats. The Moderate-Conservative GOP split was particularly notable in the 2000 elections: note that the entire Republican leadership of both chambers turned over in 2001-2, while the Democratic leadership turnover was much lower. Leadership turnover is high in Kansas, due to a combination of the three-party state dynamic and the high membership turnover. Republicans also have an informal practice of not keeping any one person in the Speakership for more than two, two-year-long terms, which further contributes to the high turnover in the House.

Committees

Several legislators and staffers proudly told us that in Kansas, the attitude of “fix it on the floor” does not hold sway. Legislators from both Houses, as well as staffers, argued that the committee gate keeping system works relatively well in screening bills. One staffer noted that Kansas now sees more committee-sponsored bills, and fewer individual-sponsored ones. A legislator said that flawed bills coming out of the committee have so many problems that it is not realistic to fix them on the floor—fixing one problem creates a hundred new ones. Because the state’s legislative sessions are so short (approximately 90 days per year), the legislators rely on interim-session committees, particularly for appropriations, to begin preparing legislation for the upcoming year. However, the actual budget is still hammered out in the waning days of each session in a frenzy of last-minute deal making, often in floor sessions lasting deep into the wee morning hours. Table 5 shows the upward trend in the number of bills sponsored after deadline in recent years. The Legislature has been passing resolutions suspending these deadlines for the past several years, in order to get their work done.

Overall, the committee system in Kansas appears to be effective at screening bills. Tables 6, 6H, and 6S show that the percentage of committee-introduced bills, as opposed to individual-introduced ones, is actually increasing in recent years. The effect is occurring in both chambers. This may contrast sharply with some term-limited states where leadership has lost some control over the rank-and-file membership. One staffer we interviewed suggested that as legislators learn how much mail and e-mail the sponsor of a bill receives, along with innumerable phone calls, legislators may be deterred from sponsoring more legislation. Democratic-sponsored bills rarely make it out of committee

in Kansas, so Democrats focus on floor amendments as a vehicle for passing legislation. Minority-friendly rules in both chambers, plus the divided GOP, help facilitate this process.

Interviewees overwhelmingly agreed that the Speakers choose committee chairs based upon how the candidates voted in the election for the Speaker: those in the faction that supported the winner get the “spoils” of key committee assignments. House minority leadership did not describe their own process in quite the same way, arguing instead that they strove to provide a geographic balance among Democrats from different regions of the state on each committee. Freshman committee chairs are unheard-of in Kansas, though occasionally a promising new legislator will rise immediately to the position of vice-chair.

Committee work was an issue upon which House and Senate members exchanged some minor barbs. One prominent House committee chair told us, “we have a saying [that] whenever a House member leaves for the Senate, the IQ of both bodies improves.” But a member of Senate leadership countered that the House was more guilty of a “fix it on the floor” mentality than was the Senate, and a Senate staffer added that the House often sent flawed bills to the Senate in a rush to get roll-call votes recorded before the next election. However, another staffer disagreed, arguing that neither the House nor the Senate were guilty of playing “fix it on the floor.” A House committee chair lamented that only a few of the entering freshmen each year really wanted to invest the time and learn the policy process the way they should for effective committee work. Leaders and staffers in both parties told us that there was usually a near-consensus when leaders

talked among themselves to single out the few members of each freshmen class who were wise and hard-working enough to begin the rise to committee leadership positions.

Budget and Appropriations Process

Legislators and staffers interviewed argued that the state budget process was relatively well-organized and drew on the institutional memory available to a state without term limits. However, some outside observers have noted a more chaotic process than the one described by our interviewees. Those we studied made a conservative argument against term limits. Our interviewees believed that the institutional knowledge of a non-term-limited legislature is the best way to keep ambitious bureaucrats' spending ambitions in check.

On the House side, one committee chair told us that Appropriations is the "Speaker's committee"—the chair is expected to be close to the Speaker and follow the Speaker's wishes, for example, in crafting a budget without any tax increases. In years past, the Appropriations Chair was a shoe-in to be the next Speaker. Today, the Speaker's election is driven by the three-party state dynamic. For his part, the Minority Leader strives to represent different regions of the state fairly when making minority appointments to Appropriations.

Freshmen are not appointed to the House Appropriations Committee. That is because the committee demands more institutional knowledge than do some others. By Kansas standards, the committee is well-staffed with three staff members that report directly to the Appropriations Chair. However, this staffing is still light compared to more-professional legislatures: all three of these employees are part-year hires, working full-time only when the legislature is in session (January-April). A committee chair told

us that institutional knowledge comes in particularly handy when state agencies request new spending. Often, these agencies had requested spending for the same new programs several years earlier. Experienced members know to ask what happened to the money from last time, while less-experienced ones may never know about an agency's history of requesting similar funding increases in years past.

On the Senate side, a committee chair told us that the Senate Finance Chair is considered part of the leadership team and works closely with the Senate President. Some of this may be due to political alliances among the particular individuals that held those positions when we conducted our study.

For the past several years, both chambers have used an informal subcommittee system. Though neither chamber formally has subcommittees, each one uses other committees to subdivide the budget into smaller pieces. On the House side, several Budget committees specialize in certain areas such as education or social services, while on the Senate side, there are 30 such informal subcommittees: one for each major state agency. For the past several sessions, the Senate has run appropriations as one omnibus bill instead of a separate bill for each agency or part of the state budget: a committee chair argued that this makes the process better-organized than in the past.

This well-organized picture of committee work is somewhat in tension with observations by scholars over the past few sessions. In his 1994 book Time, Politics, and Policies, political scientist Burdett Loomis saw the Kansas budget process culminating in a series of late-night, last-minute budget deals driven by deadlines, and this process has continued into the twenty-first century, with legislative sessions gradually getting longer and last-minute dealmaking driving the last days of the session late into the night. One

House leader told us of one such deal last year, made directly between the Governor and the House leadership when “the Senate wasn’t really in the loop.” Thus, this picture of a carefully-organized division of labor handling the budget should be taken with a grain of salt. Nevertheless, several leaders in both chambers worried that term limits would have cost the legislature the institutional knowledge needed to keep ambitious bureaucrats’ spending proposals in check—a conservative argument in opposition to term limits.

Staff

Interviewees overwhelmingly agreed that the most-effective staffers were the ones in the nonpartisan offices, notably the Reviser of Statutes, the Legislative Research Department, the Division of the Budget, and the Division of Post-Audit. Legislators from both chambers and both parties heaped praise on these staffers, arguing that they shoulder incredibly heavy burdens and get little, if any sleep during the waning ways of the sessions. They argued further that these staffers are always nonpartisan and professional, and that the legislature would not function without them. Turnover among these staffers is relatively low. Most staffers and legislators attribute the lower turnover not to particularly generous pay, but to high morale and excellent recruitment of top candidates by those who make the hiring decisions. One lobbyist argued that the staffers are incredibly powerful due to the fact that they turn over far less frequently than the legislators themselves. He added that some legislators had floated the idea of rotating staff from committee to committee in order to break the staff’s power to specialize in one area and therefore build up more institutional knowledge than the legislators themselves possess. However, this idea has never gone far due to the fact that the legislators depend on the staffers’ institutional knowledge to function effectively. However, a veteran

legislator did note some informal practices that place limits on staff power—most notably, veterans discourage freshmen from asking staff for their opinions on what to do when facing a tough vote. This may send the staff on an “ego trip.”

Partisan staff in the Kansas Legislature is small. Leaders are forced to rely heavily on interns, with their staff dividing the less-experienced interns (usually college undergraduates) into one pool and the more-experienced (usually law students) into another. This way, the interns in the latter pool can do work that, in a more professionalized legislature, would be done by paid staff—actually assisting with policy decisions and procuring policy information, for example. Member-by-member staffing is also limited: rank-and-file House members share one secretary for every three members. Neither House nor Senate members have any in-district staff. One senator summed it up: “you need someone to answer the phone and help with routine office matters. You wouldn’t require any more.” It should be added that the small population of districts and relatively short sessions in Kansas makes in-district staff much less necessary than might be the case in either a more-populous state, or one in which legislators are away from home from longer portions of the year.

The Kansas Legislature’s approach to staffing tends to centralize and professionalize the role of staff—the most-influential staffers are those in the nonpartisan offices that are relied upon by members of both parties and, in most cases, both chambers. They are nonpartisan and hired under civil service laws rather than being appointed by the House and Senate members themselves. The individual members and leaders, by contrast, tend to have bare-minimum staff and rely heavily on interns to supplement the staff they do have. However, some of the leadership and party caucus

staffers have served for many years and built up a great deal of institutional knowledge in managing their bare-bones staff and interns for maximum effectiveness with minimal resources. Indeed, the House Democrats fundraise to supplement the pay of their small partisan staff.

Lobbyists

Some impartial observers and lobbyists themselves noted that Kansas now has more lobbyists than in the past. Most who mentioned this would attribute it to the fact that legislation is more complex now than in the past: there are more federal mandates on grant monies, and state government itself has grown tremendously in the last several decades. However, one lobbyist also argued that the three party state dynamic made his job more challenging and required greater lobbying resources. Of two lobbyists interviewed, one believed that there had been much more continuity than change in his job during the time—more than a decade—that he has been lobbying the legislature. But the other countered that the growth of state government made his job harder: there was more money and more legislation for the lobbyist to track, in order to do his job effectively.

No one interviewed worried that lobbyists were running the state legislature. There was universal agreement that lobbyists wanted only a “fair hearing” for their causes and they did not have the power to make or break legislation. Not surprisingly, one lobbyist stressed that a great deal of his job was in tracking legislation near the end of the process—in conference committee, when final legislation was hammered out, often in the last days of the session. Much of the rest of the time he spent trying to track where a

given piece of legislation was within the legislative process. This job has not changed much during more than ten years of service.

Civility

Our interviewees gave the Kansas Legislature mixed reviews on civility. Some praised it, with one staffer saying, “They can disagree, but don’t have to be disagreeable’ is how we put it in Kansas.” Several House members stressed the fact that the Speaker and Minority Leader are personal friends who took office as freshmen in the same year and have worked together ever since. They believed that this was good for civility in the House.

However, there were also warning notes sounded on the civility issue. Several longtime staffers were convinced that civility had declined in recent years, primarily due to the moderate-conservative split in the GOP. One staffer added that, in his view, the problems came from single-issue legislators who pushed divisive issues like abortion and gun rights at all costs. There was a pronounced tendency for those lamenting the loss of civility to be on the Senate side. Some senators lamented “bomb throwers,” and they were generally referring to members of their own, majority party that opposed the Senate leadership. A disgruntled conservative retorted that the Senate was made up of “strong leaders surrounded by stooges.” On the House side, one Republican member suggested that the Democratic caucus was more divided than the casual observer might think. But other leaders in both chambers noted that the election of the Democratic Governor has been very good for civility between both parties. A House leader said that the Democrats used to just “sit back and throw darts,” that is, put forth unworkable but popular roll-call amendments that put Republicans in a difficult spot, but now that Democrats had the

gubernatorial veto they had to be more careful. A Senate leader also said that Democrats were now “more responsible” in the legislation they proposed, and that “everybody notices” the difference.

There were also notes of incivility between the House and the Senate, as previously mentioned with the “IQ of both bodies improves” joke and a senator’s retort that the House often pushes for a roll-call vote before legislation is ready. But the leadership of each chamber spoke warmly of the leadership in the other chamber, and they argued that they often communicated to track the status of legislation. However, even that process may break down in the last-minute frenzy that accompanies the passage of the budget: one House leader said that the previous budget was a compromise between the House and the Governor’s office and “the Senate wasn’t really in the loop.” Overall, reviews on civility were mixed. But our observations of the floor activity revealed no shouting matches on the floor, breakdowns of decorum, or other obvious signs that civility has declined beyond the point of no return. There was much cursing and muttering behind the scenes, but on the floor both chambers remained relatively genteel bodies.

Balance of Power

No one interviewed thought that either chamber had a particular advantage over the other when it came to the balance of power. The barbs exchanged by the House and Senate members interviewed may reflect the fact that each must work with the other in order to get legislation passed—and the two bodies do not always see things the same way. Some senators noted that House members may run for Senate in order to gain a larger district, be one of forty votes instead of one of one hundred and twenty five, and to

move to a four-year election cycle instead of a two-year one. But the overall power of the two chambers appears to be relatively comparable.

Table 1: Membership Turnover shows the very high turnover for the Senate. This turnover may weaken the Senate's power relative to what it would be otherwise. In general, the Senate is hamstrung by the moderate-conservative GOP split (see Table 4: Leadership Turnover) and very high membership turnover, and the Senate President is weakened in that he lacks the power to make committee assignments. All of these factors may have a leveling effect on the Senate's power, keeping the upper chamber's power limited and restricting their ability to dominate the House.

Interviewees thought the balance of power between legislature and Governor was a complex phenomenon that was heavily dependent on the personality of whomever happened to be Governor at the time. But no one we interviewed could see any institutional changes in this balance of power during the past ten years. One lobbyist noted that a Governor who served several years ago was so ineffective that the Senate had bulk roll-call veto overrides! But some Republicans noted that the current Governor, a Democrat, was actually much more communicative with legislators than her immediate predecessor, who was a member of their own party. One committee chair argued that the legislature has the capacity to wield a good deal more power than the Governor, but they rarely use this power to its fullest extent because the turnover is too high, and there are too few members willing to invest the time and effort into developing the institutional knowledge needed to do this. Thus he saw the legislature's actions as falling well short of the power it potentially could hold if it had longer-serving, harder-working members.

Reactions to the last two Governors again put the moderate-conservative GOP split in sharp relief. Overall, Republicans were no more impressed with the last Governor—a fellow Republican—than they were with the current Governor, a Democrat. In fact, several Republicans preferred working with the current administration, which they believed was more responsive to the legislature and better at communication. However, Republicans, particularly in the House, also saw the election of a Democratic Governor as an opportunity to unite the party in opposition to her agenda and propose their own alternatives, stressing the familiar themes of smaller government and lower taxes. One House leader noted that Republicans can still unify behind these themes, but social issues like abortion rights and urban-rural splits like those over school funding tend to divide the party.

Adaptations

There are a number of different alternatives in place for orienting freshmen to the legislative process. Some are handled by the nonpartisan staff, who conduct training sessions. Party leaders have special orientation sessions with newly-elected freshmen, and some have also set up a “mentor” system to pair each freshman with a senior member. Staffers conduct a short, mock legislative session with the newly-elected freshmen just before they take office.

Since Kansas lacks term limits, the legislature has not had to adapt to as much sudden change as would be the case in other states. One longtime, high-ranking staffer was convinced that the legislative process, overall, had changed in only one significant way since the 1970s: there is much greater reliance on personal computers and the Internet. Several other staffers also mentioned the increased reliance on new information

technology, and at least one committee is experimenting with going “paperless.” Two staffers believed that the new information technology may empower the rank-and-file and weaken leadership a bit, because any member comfortable with the Internet can now research legislation on her own, without a reliance upon staff or upon whatever information leadership chooses to provide.

The legislature has also had to adapt to the more-complex atmosphere of government: more responsibilities, more money, and more mandates as state government has grown tremendously in the past several decades. The ninety-day session is stretched to the breaking point, with the veto session now used as instead as a wrap-up session to complete budget work and major legislation. Last-minute budget deals keep the legislature in session late into the night at the end of the session. Some legislators lamented the ninety-day session, but others argued that the session length would not be a problem if their colleagues would move more quickly toward passing legislation and stop their infighting earlier in the session. Several legislators noted that interim committees have become essential in order to develop institutional knowledge and debate legislative options in between sessions. This increases the workload on the legislators, whose pay has not increased accordingly, and thus may lead to higher turnover.

Conclusion

The Sunflower State has experienced a good deal of continuity in legislative processes. No single event has shocked the system the way term limits may have done in other states. But over time, several changes have challenged the institution. The dominant themes of our interviews were as follows:

1. Nearly everything in the legislature is driven by the three-party state dynamic, that is, the split of the dominant GOP into moderate and conservative wings. The legislature functions as a coalition body, with the three parties (minority Democrats being the third) forced to build coalitions in order to pass legislation. Even Republican leadership is not immune from being challenged and defeated by Republicans from the other faction of the party. The most effective Republican leaders are the ones that can stress themes that unify the party; the most effective Democratic leaders are experts on procedure who can exploit minority-friendly rules and build coalitions to make law in spite their near-perpetual minority status. Overall, we heard more complaints about the moderate-conservative GOP split in the Senate than in the House.
2. Low pay (about \$21,000 per session) serves as an informal term limit. Furthermore, the complexity of governing a modern state is causing the workload to increase while the pay does not. This may be driving high turnover rates, which approach those of a term-limited state. The Senate's turnover rate is very high, and this probably weakens its institutional position relative to the House. The moderate-conservative GOP split is particularly acute in the Senate and this may have an adverse impact on civility and the quality of the work environment, again contributing to the very high turnover.
3. Nonpartisan, centralized staff is very powerful. High turnover among legislators and low turnover among staff insure that much of the institutional knowledge rests with the staffers. Party caucus, leadership, and individual

office staff are limited, but the nonpartisan staff is sufficient to be this legislature's primary storehouse of institutional knowledge.

4. The committee system in the Kansas Legislature generally works well at screening bills. There is always room for improvement: some senators accused re-election minded House members of rushing bills through too quickly, and one House member lamented the fact that his colleagues did not stay longer and build more institutional knowledge. But overall, the committee system stops a "fix it on the floor" approach from taking hold, and the number of individual-sponsored bills actually appears to be decreasing in favor of more committee-sponsored bills.
5. In terms of composition, the dominant change is the shift from rural to suburban power, which reflects the demographic shifts of the state due to redistricting. These rural-to-suburban changes create cleavages on issues like school funding and gun control. The fastest-growing, wealthiest, and largest county in the state is suburban, and it appears to be the epicenter of the moderate-conservative GOP split which drives the state's politics. Several rural legislators were convinced that their districts' patterns of re-electing incumbents until they reach committee leadership positions would be disrupted by term limits, thus weakening the power of rural communities relative to the suburban ones. This longtime rural incumbent pattern is especially noticeable in western Kansas, which is particularly hard-hit by population loss. Turnover in the growing suburban areas is much more rapid.

Year	House	Senate
1993-1994	42.4%	55.0%
1995-1996	28.0%	7.5%*
1997-1998	24.8%	40.0%
1999-2000	12.0%	5.0%*
2001-2002	20.0%	42.5%
2003-2004	23.2%	12.5%*

*All Kansas Senate seats were up for election to four-year terms in 1992, 1996, and 2000. The turnover in 1995, 1999, and 2003 reflects intersession appointments.

Table 1 features a count of the percentage of new members in each chamber, including mid-session appointments.

Year	% Democratic	% Non-White	% Women	Ave. Age
1993-1994	43.6%	6.1%	28.5%	49.0
1995-1996	35.1%	7.2%	27.9%	49.4
1997-1998	37.0%	4.8%	29.7%	50.5
1999-2000	37.0%	5.4%	31.5%	51.8
2001-2002	33.9%	6.1%	32.7%	52.2
2003-2004	33.3%	4.8%	28.5%	52.6

Year	% Democratic	% Non-White	% Women	Ave. Age
1993-1994	47.2%	4.8%	26.4%	48.2
1995-1996	36.0%	6.4%	25.6%	48.0
1997-1998	38.4%	5.6%	28.0%	49.7
1999-2000	38.4%	4.8%	32.0%	50.8
2001-2002	36.8%	5.6%	32.8%	52.7
2003-2004	36.0%	4.8%	28.0%	52.8

Year	% Democratic	% Non-White	% Women	Ave. Age
1993-1994	32.5%	10%	35%	51.4
1995-1996	32.5%	10%	32.5%	53.4
1997-1998	32.5%	2.5%	35%	52.9
1999-2000	32.5%	7.5%	32.5%	54.9
2001-2002	25%	7.5%	32.5%	50.8
2003-2004	25%	5.0%	25%	51.7

Year	House		Senate	
	R to D	D to R	R to D	D to R
1992	6	10	0	5
1994	1	16	0	0
1996	6	2	2	2
1998	1	1	0	0
2000	1	3	0	3
2002	3	6	0	0

*All Kansas Senate seats were up for re-election to four-year terms in 1992, 1996, and 2000. There were some intersession appointments, but no seats changed parties as a result.

Table 4: Leadership Turnover in the Kansas Legislature

Year	House D	House R	House Total	Senate D	Senate R	Senate Total
1993-1994	4 of 6	5 of 6	12 of 12*, **	3 of 5	3 of 5	6 of 10
1995-1996	3 of 6	3 of 6	6 of 12**	0 of 5	2 of 5	2 of 10
1997-1998	2 of 6	4 of 6	6 of 12	5 of 5	3 of 5	8 of 10
1999-2000	4 of 6	5 of 6	9 of 12	0 of 5	0 of 5	0 of 10
2001-2002	2 of 6	6 of 6	8 of 12	1 of 5	5 of 5	6 of 10
2003-2004	3 of 6	6 of 6	9 of 12	0 of 5	1 of 5	1 of 10

*Legislature changed party control in 1993.

**Republicans left the Minority Caucus Chair position vacant in 1991-1992 and the Majority Whip position vacant in 1993-1994

Table 5: Bill Introductions

Year	House	Senate	Total	After Deadline	% After Deadline
1993	552	439	991	116	12%
1994	547	419	966	94	10%
1995	593	388	981	110	11%
1996	506	370	876	106	12%
1997	583	387	970	135	14%
1998	453	307	760	91	12%
1999	576	366	942	117	12%
2000	478	307	785	110	14%
2001	603	367	970	224	23%
2002	440	297	737	98	13%
2003	474	285	759	121	16%

Table 6: Committee-Introduced Bills as a % of Total in the Kansas Legislature

Year	Committee	Individual	% Committee
1993	658	333	66%
1994	623	343	64%
1995	673	308	66%
1996	647	229	74%
1997	662	308	68%
1998	548	212	72%
1999	677	265	72%
2000	578	207	74%
2001	752	218	78%
2002	547	190	74%
2003	582	177	77%

Table 6H: Committee-Introduced Bills as a % of the Total in the Kansas House

Year	Committee	Individual	% Committee
1993	305	274	55%
1994	301	246	55%
1995	356	237	60%
1996	330	176	65%
1997	341	242	58%
1998	303	150	67%
1999	367	209	64%
2000	331	147	69%
2001	446	157	74%
2002	289	151	66%
2003	356	118	75%

Table 6S: Committee-Introduced Bills as % of the Total in the Kansas Senate

Year	Committee	Individual	% Committee
1993	353	86	80%
1994	322	97	77%
1995	317	71	82%
1996	317	53	86%
1997	321	66	83%
1998	245	62	80%
1999	310	56	85%
2000	247	60	80%
2001	306	61	83%
2002	258	39	87%
2003	226	59	79%