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Legislative Opportunities for Emporia and Lyon County 2015

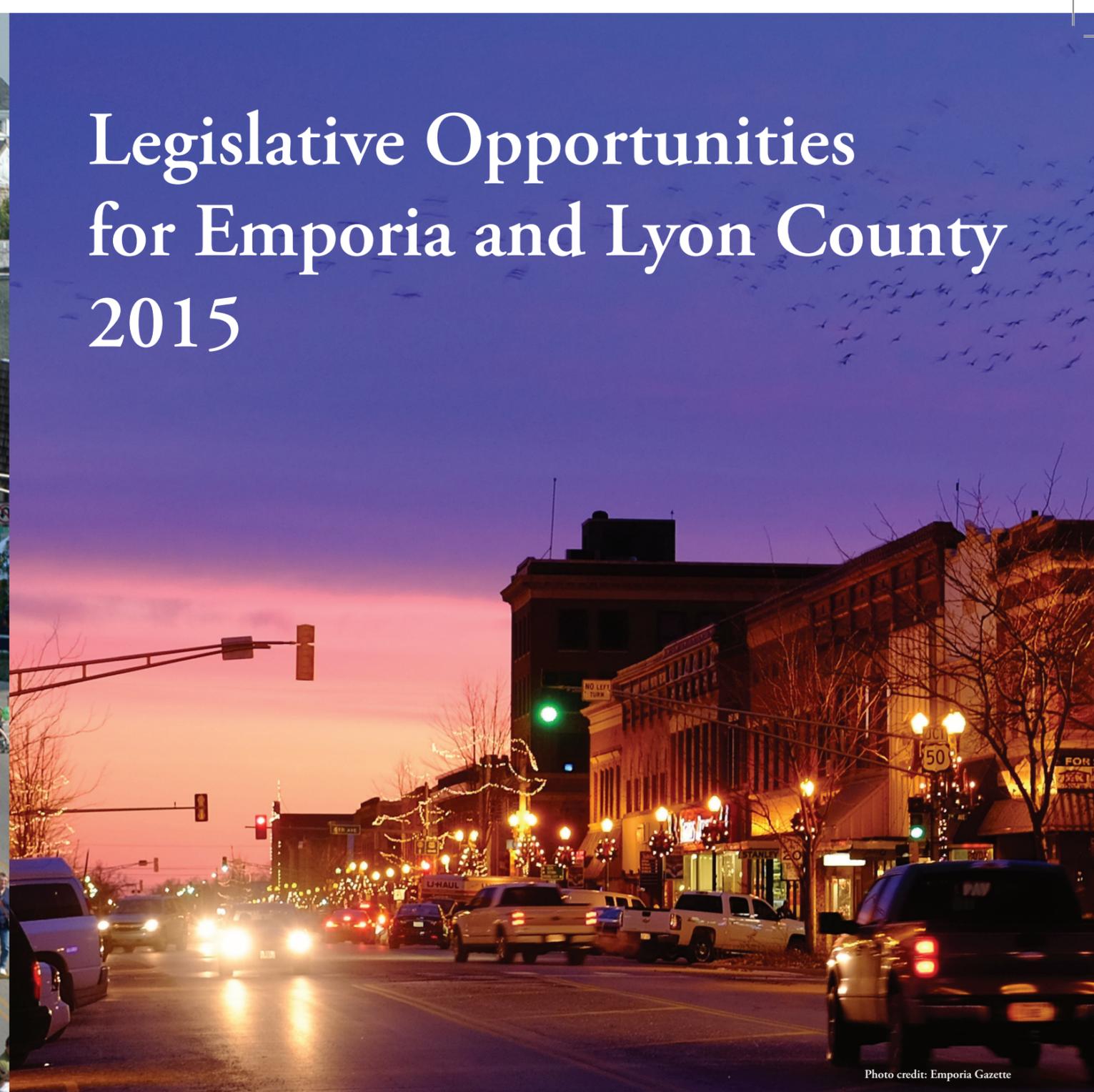


Photo credit: Emporia Gazette

With a culture that is family friendly, safe, and welcoming to all, Emporia and Lyon County have a track record of out-of-the-box thinking.

Serving as the county seat, Emporia is the largest city in Lyon County, covering 9.97 square miles. The combined population of Emporia and Lyon County is more than 33,500. It is not just what we have — it's who we are. We are friends, families, and neighbors living in a community where heritage meets the future with grace and style. As a community, we have joined together to share with you what is important to the future of our city and county.



Education

Education has always been an essential component to the health and well-being of the Emporia/Lyon County community. This is illustrated by Collaborate — a magazine published by the Emporia Public Schools, Emporia State University, and Flint Hills Technical College — that can be viewed at emporiaeducation.org. From our public and private preschools to a continuum of educational opportunities for post-secondary students, we understand just how vital education is in our capacity to attract and retain meaningful employment opportunities across the State of Kansas.

Emporia is uniquely proud to be home to one of six regent institutions in our state, Emporia State University, and one of six technical colleges, Flint Hills Technical College. Graduates of these institutions make up a significant part of the workforce and the economic landscape in our state. Emporia State is hailed as one of the best teacher preparation programs in the nation, and our graduating teachers influence the future for thousands of students each year. The School of Nursing at Emporia State University ranks 14th in the Top 100 Nursing Programs in the nation, and Flint Hills Technical College offers the only Power Plant Technology program in the State.

Opportunities

We believe aligning our state college and career-ready standards with those of other states across the nation will minimize the learning loss that is a result of differences across grade levels and localities.

We believe Kansas can be assured a ready workforce through the development and expansion of technical and professional career training opportunities.

We believe it is time to assure an adequate and equitable investment in education that keeps pace with the increasing cost of living and guards against disparate opportunities for students across the state by shifting a greater share of the financial burden to local taxpayers.

We believe the state of Kansas should require prompt and timely transfers of fiscal payments to schools so they can meet their financial obligations.



Transportation

Six major highway systems serve the economy of Lyon County, with Emporia being at the crossroads of four of them: the KTA, US-50, I-35, and K-99. US-56 is a vital link across north Lyon County and accesses the KTA near Admire, while K-170 is an important economic link between Lyon and Osage Counties.

Our transportation systems are the foundation for the efficient movement of goods and people, and are crucial for economic development, business retention/expansion and job growth. It is imperative that KDOT and other government entities be financially committed to the improvement of roads and bridges in an effort to meet the ever increasing demands being placed on these aging structures. This includes efforts to streamline the process required for obtaining over-dimensional and overweight permits. Because of the critical importance of infrastructure to Kansas's economic success, it is imperative to maintain the funds that have been designated for transportation and to not use these funds for any other purpose; as an example the distribution of funds to the Special City-County Highway Fund from the collection of fees on interstate commercial vehicles.

Opportunities

We believe the state of Kansas should continue to provide funding to assist with economic development projects that include transportation improvements.

We advocate the separation of funds between KDOT and the KTA.

We believe the state should fully fund and implement the T-works projects that include:

- Extending existing four lanes west of Emporia on U.S. Highway 50
- Continued expansion of U.S. Highway 50 from Strong City to Emporia, which includes extending existing passing lanes at Chase/Lyon County line.
- Improving the two-lane segment of U.S. 56 from the Morris County line to the KTA toll booth.
- Continued federal and state support for airport improvements.
- Funding improvements for safety at two locations on Highway 99: At the Allen Road (Road L) and at the Reading Road, (Highway 170).



Health Care

Emporia is home to Newman Regional Health, Central Care Cancer Center, Flint Hills Community Health Center, Mental Health Center of East Central Kansas, and Newman Medical Plaza.

Kansas statute and Attorney General opinions currently prevent Newman Regional Health and other County owned hospitals from operating or funding primary care and specialty clinics outside their home counties. This limits access to healthcare for those living in counties without hospitals or an adequate number of physicians, prevents collaboration between hospitals in adjacent counties and provides a competitive advantage to hospitals and health systems not subject to these restrictions.

Currently the State of Kansas via the KanCare program contracts with managed care companies to operate the State's Medicaid program. Since the start of this program almost a year and a half ago, these companies have demonstrated an inability to promptly process and pay claims submitted by Newman Regional Health and other local providers for services provided to Medicaid patients. As a result, unpaid claims for services provided by Newman have grown from \$600,000 at the start of the KanCare program to \$1.6 million today. Medicaid reimbursement covers less than 30% of the \$1.6 million owed, but still represents \$400,000 in cash not available for equipment purchases or investment.

The State's reluctance to participate in the Medicaid expansion program provided for in the Affordable Care Act means that Kansas lost more than \$334 million in federal funding during 2014 and will lose more than \$380 million in federal funding during 2015. As a result, Newman Regional Health alone lost almost \$1 million in Medicaid revenue during 2014.

Opportunities

We believe laws that limit competition should be repealed to allow local county hospital governance and elected county commissioners to make these determinations.

We advocate a mandate for "interim payment" to hospitals and other providers disadvantaged by the lack of prompt payment from KanCare Contractors.

We believe the State of Kansas should participate in Medicaid E.



Local Elections and Governance

We strongly support the current way our local elections are executed. We have local control whereby local officials, elected through partisan and non-partisan elections, regulation and provision of services to meet the needs of the communities they serve, including, but not limited to, determining the timing of local elections (i.e., spring or fall and even- or odd-numbered years).

Quick Facts

Twinkie Capital of the World! Hostess Brands was purchased out of bankruptcy and reopened its Emporia plant in April 2013. Today it has more than 450 employees and is the flagship plant that produces 60% for all three plants.

City of Veterans Appreciation! Not only is Emporia the founding city of Veterans Day, U.S. News & World Report in 2013 named Emporia State University a Best College for Veterans.

Pet Food Capital of the World! Emporia is the self-declared pet nutrition production capital of the world with Hills Pet Nutrition, Simmons Pet Food, and Cargill Animal Nutrition located there. Emporia produces more pet food per capita than anywhere in the world and the recent Simmons Pet Food expansion will increase the capacity to be in excess of 240,000,000 cans of pet food per year.

Education City! Bankrate.com ranked FHTC as No. 4 in the nation among all technical and community colleges. Emporia High School received a bronze award designation for best high schools ranked by U.S. News & World Report. Emporia State University's Nursing program was ranked No. 14 in the nation by CollegeAtlas.org in 2014, while its graduated programs offered by The Teachers College are tops in Kansas, according to U.S. News and World Reports, and its online graduate education programs are No. 11 in the nation.

One of the World's Best Races! The Dirty Kanza 200 was named one of the top races in the world by Velo Magazine. Cyclists from across the U.S., Canada, and Europe come to Emporia for this annual event.

One of the Nation's Premier Disc Golf Tournaments! The Glass Blown Open in Emporia, a sanctioned disc golf tournament by the Professional Disc Golf Association, will play host to more than 950 disc golfers from across the United States and nine countries this spring.