

2023 Legislative and Policy Priorities

REAP's purpose is to provide a unified voice for the region at the state and national levels, advance greater economic prosperity from regional cooperation and address issues that cross political boundaries. The following issues have been identified by the members of REAP as policy and Legislative priorities for South Central Kansas.



REGIONAL JOB GROWTH & BUSINESS EXPANSION

Workforce

- REAP supports policies and investments targeting workforce recruitment strategies and skills training in high-demand areas that generate high wage career opportunities vital to economic development in South Central Kansas.
- REAP supports legislation to expand funding for workforce development programs, including the Excel in CTE initiative, the National Center for Aviation Training (NCAT), work-based learning, and apprenticeships.
- REAP supports crafting incentives to aid industry in attracting and retaining talent locally.

Education

- REAP encourages policymakers and post-secondary institutions to adopt innovative programs and practices to meet the need of an abundant and skilled business workforce.
- REAP supports legislation that would increase need-based aid for first generation or non-traditional students aiming for higher education to bolster workforce talent.
- REAP supports funding to make college affordable by offering scholarships that close the gap between Pell grant and cost of attendance.
- REAP supports the continuation of fully funding state aid for K-12 school districts as this directly impacts workforce readiness and property tax policy for South Central Kansas.

Economic Development

- REAP supports continued availability and expansion of economic development incentives, programs, and tools that keep the state competitive regionally, nationally and globally.
- REAP supports funding and incentives for childcare facilities and grants for families who cannot afford childcare, to help maintain a robust workforce.
- REAP encourages state efforts to increase access to affordable housing in addition to mixed-use housing communities.
- REAP supports state legislation establishing a program to help the state collect state and local sales and compensating use taxes due from in-state purchasers on remote sales. Remitted taxes should be distributed using existing methods/formulas for the state and local governments.
- REAP supports property appraisals based on fair-market value. We oppose any legislation that artificially limits or otherwise alters property valuation.

BEHAVIORAL HEALTHCARE

- REAP encourages additional investments to address access to mental health treatment, including funding to build a regional mental health hospital in South Central Kansas.
- REAP supports additional and innovative solutions to combat, treat and prevent addiction to opioids and other drugs.
- REAP supports legislation to assist and support a stronger workforce pipeline, attract new workforce, and support current behavioral healthcare staff.

REGIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Federal Infrastructure Funding

- The federal government passed three bills with significant infrastructure investment opportunities in South Central Kansas communities. Federal funding is available for broadband deployment, water and wastewater investment, power and energy sector investment, resiliency programs as well as sizable, targeted transportation dollars. REAP will work with the State to ensure assistance with the required local match needed to secure funding and to help with the build out of the grant writing and support network to help facilitate securing all the federal formula and grant money available to South Central Kansas communities.

Funding for Transportation Priorities

- REAP recognizes the need for adequate funding to build and preserve the transportation infrastructure in South Central Kansas, specifically projects/investments with that are vital to business and industry. REAP supports the Eisenhower Legacy Transportation Program (IKE) and encourages equitable taxing and distribution of funding to address critical needs in South Central Kansas.

Rail Service

- REAP supports state funding for existing freight rail service and expansion of passenger rail in Kansas, specifically passenger rail service expanding the Heartland Flyer from Dallas/Ft Worth and Oklahoma City connecting through Wichita to Newton and the Southwest Chief, providing our state with service to Oklahoma and Texas. This will improve the Kansas transportation system by creating an expanded connection to the Amtrak national grid.

Water Protection

- REAP supports policies and strategies to protect water resources critical to the economy of South Central Kansas, including protection of the Equus Beds Aquifer that supplies water for 20% of the Kansas population.
- REAP recognizes the need for all voices to be heard on the Groundwater Management District 2 (GMD2) Board of Directors and supports legislation to ensure fair and equitable municipal representation on the GMD2 Board.

Energy Resources

- REAP recognizes the importance of energy to the regional economy and supports access to, and production of a variety of energy sources from oil and natural gas to clean energy.

HOME RULE

- REAP favors extending constitutional protection for county home rule authority – a change that will enable county leaders to best serve their constituents

FEDERAL ISSUES

- REAP supports full funding for employment and training systems driven by the needs of business and industry by leveraging opportunities under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) to enhance sector-based partnerships that are employer led and advocate for demand-driven workforce and training programs.
- REAP supports federal funding for expansion of passenger rail in Kansas, specifically passenger rail service expanding the Heartland Flyer from Dallas/Ft Worth and Oklahoma City connecting through Wichita to Newton and the Southwest Chief, providing our state with service to Oklahoma and Texas.