

SESSION OF 2025

**SUPPLEMENTAL NOTE ON SENATE BILL NO. 36**

As Recommended by Senate Committee on  
Agriculture and Natural Resources

**Brief\***

SB 36 would amend law regarding conservation districts.

[*Note:* Conservation districts were first established in law by the Legislature in 1937 following the Dust Bowl. The conservation district is the main local unit of government regarding the conservation of soil, water, and other related natural resources located within the boundaries of a county and operates under the purview of the Division of Conservation (Division) of the Kansas Department of Agriculture (KDA).]

The bill would change the date from September 1 to November 1 by which conservation districts are required to submit a certification to the Division of the amount of moneys required for conservation district activities each year.

The bill would increase the cap on the amount of funding that would be allocated by the Division to the conservation districts from \$25,000 to \$50,000 per district, beginning in FY 2026, subject to appropriation.

The bill would also increase the State's current matching funding from \$1 to \$2 state funding to \$1 county funding.

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\*Supplemental notes are prepared by the Legislative Research Department and do not express legislative intent. The supplemental note and fiscal note for this bill may be accessed on the Internet at <https://klrd.gov/>

## **Background**

The bill was introduced by the Senate Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources at the request of Sean Miller on behalf of Kansas Association of Conservation Districts.

### ***Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources***

In the Senate Committee hearing, **proponent** testimony was provided by the Executive Director of the Kansas Association of Conservation Districts and the Assistant Secretary of Agriculture. The proponents stated the increased state matching funds and higher cap will allow the KDA to distribute more moneys to conservation districts that can be used for salaries and wages for conservation district managers and upkeep of conservation equipment. The proponents also noted that conservation district manager turnover is a notable problem across the state due to low pay and lack of benefits, and that this position is the first point-of-contact for any conservation district and requires significant training and experience.

Written-only proponent testimony was provided by The Nature Conservancy.

No other testimony was provided.

## **Fiscal Information**

According to the fiscal note prepared by the Division of the Budget on the bill, KDA estimates enactment of the bill could increase state aid to conservation districts in the Division. KDA indicates the FY 2025 appropriation from the State Water Plan Fund (SWPF) totaling \$3.5 million provided an average of \$33,359 per disbursement to each district. These disbursements to conservation districts occurred on July 10, 2024 (beginning of FY 2025).

For FY 2026, the Governor recommends a \$4.3 million appropriation from the SWPF and a \$1.0 million transfer from the 2024 HB 2302 Projects Fund in the Kansas Water Office for state aid to conservation districts. KDA notes that the appropriation and transfer could increase state aid to conservation districts in FY 2026; however, any state aid to conservation districts would be subject to the ultimately legislative-approved appropriation and the matching county commissions allocations to conservation districts. As a result, a fiscal effect for FY 2026 cannot be estimated.

The Kansas Association of Counties indicates that enactment of the bill could increase counties' allocations to conservation districts to meet the new match amount; however, a fiscal effect cannot be estimated.

Any fiscal effect associated with the bill is not reflected in *The FY 2026 Governor's Budget Report*.

Conservation districts; funding; Division of Conservation; Kansas Department of Agriculture