

SESSION OF 2026

SUPPLEMENTAL NOTE ON SENATE BILL NO. 496

As Amended by Senate Committee on
Education

Brief*

SB 496, as amended, would require the State Board of Regents (Board), in consultation with the Attorney General, to develop materials, programs, and procedures on freedom of speech, association, and religious exercise for the purpose of training certain individuals at select postsecondary educational institutions. The bill would also require the Board to verify institutional compliance to the Legislature and establish enforcement mechanisms.

Training Materials

The bill would require the Board, in consultation with the Attorney General, to develop materials and procedures for annual training at postsecondary educational institutions on policies and duties related to freedom of speech, association, and religious exercise on campus.

[*Note:* The term “postsecondary educational institution” would mean any public university, municipal university, community college, technical college, and institution of technology.]

Such materials, programs, and procedures would be required, but not limited, to address:

- The Kansas Preservation of Religious Freedom Act;

*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/>

- Sections of the Bill of Rights of the *Kansas Constitution* regarding the right of peaceable assembly, religious liberty, and liberty of the press and speech; and
- The First Amendment of the *U.S. Constitution*.

Training

The bill would require that each postsecondary educational institution provide annual training to select individuals utilizing the materials, programs, and procedures developed by the Board. The bill would state that the purpose of such annual training would be to ensure an understanding of policies and duties regarding freedom of speech, association, and religious exercise.

The individuals required by the bill to receive annual training would include:

- Individuals responsible for the discipline or instruction of students;
- Individuals responsible for the administration of the campus community; and
- Individuals with oversight over student organizations or who distribute activity fee funds, including, but not limited to, any:
 - President;
 - Vice president;
 - Dean;
 - Department director;
 - Administrator;
 - Campus law enforcement officer;
 - Residence life official;

- Faculty member; or
- Member of a student government organization.

The bill would provide that any student, faculty, staff, elected official, or member of an elected official's staff may attend the training or access the materials developed by the Board under the provisions of the bill.

Reporting

The bill would require the Board to annually certify to the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the President of the Senate, and the Attorney General that each postsecondary educational institution has provided the required training.

Enforcement

The bill would authorize the Attorney General to bring action against the Board or any postsecondary educational institution to enforce compliance with the bill.

Background

The bill was introduced by the Senate Committee on Education at the request of Senator Erickson.

Senate Committee on Education

In the Senate Committee hearing on March 13, 2026, **proponent** testimony was provided by a representative of 1st Amendment Partnership. The proponent generally stated that the bill aims to reduce conflicts and potential litigation by ensuring campus decision-makers are trained on existing

laws protecting religious liberty and First Amendment rights for student groups.

Neutral testimony was provided by a representative of the Board. The conferee generally stated that, should the bill be enacted, the Board would develop the required training similarly to other routine trainings, such as annual cybersecurity training, and work with the Attorney General to provide it across all postsecondary educational institutions.

Written-only **opponent** testimony was provided by representatives of Health Forward Foundation and the Kansas National Education Association.

No other testimony was provided.

The Senate Committee amended the bill to make a technical change.

Fiscal Information

According to the fiscal note prepared by the Division of the Budget on the bill, as introduced, Fort Hays State University estimates enactment of the bill would require additional State General Fund (SGF) expenditures of \$4,000 in FY 2027 and \$2,000 in FY 2028. For the FY 2027 amount, \$2,000 would be one-time costs for training, delivering, and tracking. The remaining \$2,000 would be for other operating expenditures to comply with the bill's provisions and would be ongoing.

Emporia State University indicates any fiscal effect resulting from the bill's enactment would be absorbed within existing resources.

Pittsburg State University estimates ongoing additional SGF expenditures of \$20,000 in both FY 2027 and FY 2028 for programming, materials, and staff time to implement the bill's provisions.

Kansas State University estimates additional SGF expenditures of \$90,000 in FY 2027 and \$30,000 in FY 2028 if the bill is enacted. Of the FY 2027 amount, the entire amount would be for one-time costs, including \$50,000 for policy review and updates, \$25,000 for training, and \$15,000 for reporting and tracking. For FY 2028, \$30,000 would be for ongoing expenditures, including \$15,000 for training, \$10,000 to compile information for annual reporting, and \$5,000 for system maintenance.

Both the University of Kansas and the University of Kansas Medical Center each estimate additional SGF expenditures of \$198,000 in FY 2027 and \$171,000 in FY 2028 if the bill is enacted. Of the FY 2027 amount, \$27,000 would be for a one-time expenditure to create a training program. The remaining \$171,000 would be ongoing expenditures for all employees to take the training program annually.

Wichita State University estimates additional SGF expenditures of between \$13,790 and \$22,420 in FY 2027 and \$8,890 and \$15,220 in FY 2028 resulting from the bill's enactment. Of the FY 2027 amount, between \$4,900 and \$7,200 would be for one-time expenditures for current staff for compliance and policy updates, training, reporting, and legal review. Ongoing expenditures would total between \$8,890 and \$15,220 for current staff to comply with the bill's provisions.

The Board states any fiscal effect resulting from the bill's enactment could be absorbed within existing resources; however, the Board states the bill's enactment could have a fiscal effect on postsecondary educational institutions related to developing, delivering, tracking, training, and legal and policy review. The Board did not estimate a fiscal effect.

The Office of the Attorney General states the bill's enactment would require the agency to consult in developing training materials and programs and to review annual compliance certifications. The agency also stated

enforcement of the bill could result in the agency bringing potential enforcement actions against the Board or postsecondary educational institutions. To carry out the bill's provisions, the agency estimates additional SGF expenditures of \$145,562 in FY 2027 and \$149,928 in FY 2028, along with an additional FTE position if the bill is enacted for both fiscal years. Of the FY 2027 amount, \$133,905 would be for salaries and wages for an additional 1.0 FTE Assistant Attorney General position and \$11,657 would be for other operating expenditures to implement the bill's provisions. Of the FY 2028 amount, \$138,271 would be for the salaries and wages for the Assistant Attorney General position and \$11,657 would be for other operating expenditures.

The Office of Judicial Administration states enactment of the bill could increase the number of cases filed in district courts because it allows the Attorney General to bring a court action to enforce compliance, which would increase the time spent by judges and court employees processing and deciding cases. The Office indicates enactment of the bill could result in the collection of docket fees in those cases filed under the bill's provisions, which would be deposited into the SGF. The Office did not estimate a fiscal effect. Any fiscal effect associated with SB 496 is not reflected in *The FY 2027 Governor's Budget Report*.

Postsecondary educational institutions; state board of regents; attorney general; freedom of speech; freedom of association; freedom of religion