

SESSION OF 2026

**SUPPLEMENTAL NOTE ON SUBSTITUTE FOR
HOUSE BILL NO. 2595**

As Recommended by House Committee on
Agriculture and Natural Resources

Brief*

HB 2595, as amended, would establish the Attorney Training Program for Rural Kansas Act (Act) and sunset its provisions on July 1, 2031.

Purpose and Definitions (Section 1)

The bill would state the purpose of the Act is to provide encouragement, opportunities, and incentives for licensed attorneys or individuals pursuing a law degree at the University of Kansas (KU) or Washburn University (Washburn) to practice law in rural Kansas.

The bill would define “advisory committee,” “law school,” “law student,” and other terms, including:

- “Practice of law” would mean:
 - Representing a client in the practice of law;
 - Serving as corporate counsel or an attorney with a local, state, or federal government body;
 - Teaching at a law school approved by the American Bar Association; and
 - Serving as a judge or judicial law clerk in a federal, state, or local court if the position requires a license to practice law;

*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/>

- “Program agreement” would mean an agreement to meet all the obligations provided in the bill; and
- “Rural” or “rural community” would mean any county of the state other than Douglas, Johnson, Sedgwick, Shawnee, and Wyandotte counties.

Attorney Training Program for Rural Kansas Advisory Committee (Section 2)

The bill would establish the Attorney Training Program for Rural Kansas Advisory Committee (Advisory Committee), which would assist in administrating the two programs created by the bill.

The Advisory Committee would have seven members appointed by the Chief Justice of the Kansas Supreme Court by October 15, 2026, and would include:

- Three attorneys licensed in Kansas who each reside in a rural community;
- Two non-attorney members who each reside in a rural community;
- One representative from Washburn; and
- One representative from KU.

The bill would authorize the Chief Justice to appoint the Chairperson of the Advisory Committee. Any vacancy on the Advisory Committee would be filled in the same manner as the original appointment.

The bill would allow the Advisory Committee to meet at any time and place, upon the call of the Chairperson. The bill would authorize the Advisory Committee members to be paid as are members of other statutorily created committees.

The bill would also authorize the Advisory Committee to adopt rules and regulations necessary to implement and administer the programs created by the bill.

The bill would require the Office of Judicial Administration (OJA) to provide staff to support the Advisory Committee.

Law Student Training and Stipend Program for Rural Kansas (Section 3)

The bill would establish the Law Student Training and Stipend Program for Rural Kansas (Student Program). The Student Program would be administered by the Advisory Committee in coordination with Washburn, for Washburn law students, and KU, for KU law students.

Program Agreements

The bill would authorize each law school, subject to appropriations, to enter into program agreements with law students who meet certain requirements and any other requirements established by the Advisory Committee and the applicable law school. Preference would be given to students who are Kansas residents.

The bill would not require a law school to enter into a program agreement with a law student.

Stipends

The bill would provide a stipend of an amount no more than \$3,000 per school year for no more than three years to each student entering into a program agreement. The stipend could be used for tuition, books, supplies, or other school expenses incurred by a law student pursuing a law degree.

The stipends provided through the bill would be deemed satisfied and forgiven upon satisfaction of all obligations required by the bill and by the program agreement.

Program Agreement Requirements

The bill would require the program agreement to require each law student who participates in the Student Program to:

- Complete the law degree program at the law school; and
- Engage in the full-time practice of law in rural Kansas within 90 days after admittance to the Kansas Bar for a period of at least 12 continuous months for each separate school year that a student receives a stipend, unless the obligation is otherwise satisfied.

Repayment Requirements

The bill would require, upon failure to satisfy the obligation of the program agreement, the repayment of the amount equal to the amount of the stipends within 90 days, less a prorated amount based on any periods of practice of law in rural Kansas that meets the requirements of the program agreement.

The bill would require payment of interest at a prime rate of interest plus 2.0 percent from the date the stipend accrued. The interest would be compounded annually.

Postponement

The bill would allow for a postponement of the obligation to engage in the practice of law in accordance with the bill during any period of temporary medical disability during which the person is unable to practice law due to the disability.

Satisfaction Obligation

An obligation to engage in the practice of law in accordance with the program agreement would be satisfied if:

- The obligation to engage in the practice of law has been completed;
- The obligated person is unable to practice law due to permanent disability; or
- The person dies.

Report to the Legislature

The bill would require the Dean of the KU School of Law and Dean of the Washburn School of Law to annually submit a report to the following committees:

- Senate Committee on Ways and Means;
- Senate Committee on Judiciary;
- House Committee on Appropriations;
- House Committee on Judiciary; and
- House Committee on Higher Education Budget.

Attorney Training and Loan Repayment Program for Rural Kansas (Section 4)

The bill would establish the Attorney Training and Loan Repayment Program for Rural Kansas (Attorney Program). The Attorney Program would be administered by the OJA in coordination with the Advisory Committee.

Nothing in the bill would be construed to create a legal entitlement to loan repayment assistance.

Kansas Rural Attorney Loan Repayment Program

The bill would require the OJA, in coordination with the Advisory Committee, and subject to appropriations, to develop and maintain the Kansas Rural Attorney Loan Repayment Program (Repayment Program) in which the State agrees to pay all or part of the principal, interest, and related expenses of the educational loans of each eligible rural attorney selected for participation in the Repayment Program.

The Advisory Committee would establish the total amount of annual financial assistance available under the Repayment Program. The amount provided to each eligible attorney would be determined by the Advisory Committee and could not exceed \$20,000 for each year the attorney establishes eligibility for assistance. The total amount of repayment assistance made to any eligible rural attorney could not exceed \$100,000, and participation could not exceed five years.

Eligibility

The bill would determine a rural attorney is eligible for loan repayment assistance from the Repayment Program if the rural attorney:

- Applies to the Advisory Committee on a form and in a manner determined by the Advisory Committee;
- Holds a law degree from an accredited postsecondary educational institution;
- Is licensed to practice law in Kansas and is in good standing at the time of application;
- Has outstanding student loan debt;
- Resides in a rural community; and

- Is engaged in the practice of law in a rural community.

Approval of Applications

The bill would authorize the Advisory Committee, in coordination with the OJA, to approve applications and provide repayment assistance for any student loan for education at a postsecondary educational institution, including, but not limited to, loans for undergraduate education received by the rural attorney through a lender.

Availability of Loan Repayment

The bill would require loan repayment to be available to eligible rural attorneys on an annual basis. To receive loan repayment, the eligible rural attorney would be required to enter into an agreement to practice law in a rural community for a period of at least 12 continuous months for each separate year the attorney receives loan repayment assistance under the Repayment Program, unless the loan repayment obligation is satisfied.

Breach of Contract

The bill would require each agreement entered into, to include reasonable penalties for breach of contract. The OJA would be responsible for enforcing the contract and collecting any damages or owed penalties.

Postponement

The bill would allow for a postponement of the obligation to engage in the practice of law in accordance with the bill during any:

- Period of temporary medical disability during which the person is unable to practice law due to the disability;
- Period of time during which the reason for not engaging in the practice of law is covered under the Family and Medical Leave Act; or
- Other period of postponement agreed to or determined in the program agreement.

Satisfaction Obligation

An obligation to engage in the practice of law in accordance with the program agreement would be satisfied if:

- The obligation to engage in the practice of law has been completed;
- The obligated person is unable to practice law due to permanent disability; or
- The person dies.

Reports to the Legislature

The bill would require the OJA to submit an annual report to the following committees:

- Senate Committee on Ways and Means;
- Senate Committee on Judiciary;
- House Committee on Appropriations;
- House Committee on Judiciary; and
- House Committee on Higher Education Budget.

The bill would require the report to include the:

- Amount of moneys allocated to the Attorney Training Program for Rural Kansas Fund (Attorney Fund);
- Number of eligible rural attorneys who applied for the Attorney Program;
- Number eligible rural attorneys who received loan repayment assistance;
- Portion of moneys appropriated from the Fund reported by use, county, number, and categories of clients served in a manner that does not violate attorney-client privilege; and
- Process for allocating funding.

***Attorney Training Program for Rural Kansas Fund
(Section 5)***

The bill would establish the Fund in the State Treasury, to be administered by the Judicial Administrator. All moneys credited to the Fund would be expended only for the Student Program or Repayment Program.

Background

The bill was introduced by the House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources at the request of Representative Rahjes.

House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources

In the House Committee hearing, **proponent** testimony was provided by Representative Rahjes, who commented on the declining number of attorneys serving rural Kansas, and that as older attorneys retire, no one is available to take over their practice or serve as judges.

Written-only proponent testimony was provided by representatives of Garden City Area Chamber of Commerce, Kansas Association of Defense, Kansas Farm Bureau, Kansas Farmers Union, and League of Kansas Municipalities, and three private attorneys.

Neutral testimony was provided by a representative of the Office of Special Counsel of the Kansas Supreme Court, who reviewed the work of the Judicial Branch, which created the Rural Justice Initiative Committee (RJIC) that traveled to rural communities across the state and heard from residents about the real-life consequences of not being able to find an attorney in the community and local region. The RJIC also heard from attorneys who were overwhelmed by the number of clients seeking their services and turning away potential business. Besides the lack of attorneys in rural areas, the conferee highlighted the issue of retiring judges in rural areas without anyone to replace them.

Written-only neutral testimony was provided by a representative of the Kansas Bar Association.

No other testimony was provided.

The House Committee amended the bill to:

- Add definitions and establish the Advisory Committee;
- Add provisions to establish the Attorney Program;
- Add provisions to establish the Repayment Program;
- Remove appropriations to the Fund;
- Require the Advisory Committee to be appointed by October 15, 2026; and

- Allow for Advisory Committee members to be paid per KSA 75-3223(e).

The House Committee recommended a substitute bill incorporating those amendments be passed.

Fiscal Information

An updated fiscal note for the substitute bill was not immediately available.

Attorney Training Program for Rural Kansas Act; Attorney Training Program for Rural Kansas Advisory Committee; Law Student Training and Stipend Program for Rural Kansas; Attorney Training and Loan Repayment Program for Rural Kansas; Attorney Training Program for Rural Kansas Fund; attorneys; law students; rural Kansas; law practice; University of Kansas; Washburn University