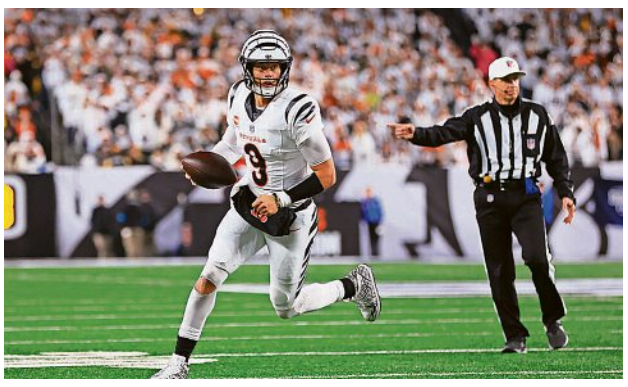

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KHP seeks Flock camera regulation

Superintendent asks lawmakers for safeguards

Jason Alatidd
Topeka Capital-Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

The superintendent of the Kansas Highway Patrol wants state lawmakers to take up legislation next session regulating automated license plate readers.

"It's been a hot topic, there's no doubt, since last summer," said Col. Erik Smith. "A lot of vocal outcry about the use of license plate readers by law enforcement, frankly, around the country."

The KHP superintendent addressed automated license plate readers, or ALPRs, during a Nov. 10 meeting of the Joint Committee on Kansas Security.

"We all need to embrace the technology," Smith said. "The technology is there and the technology exists. We also need to embrace the need to solve crime, the need to bring that technology to bear in the criminal justice space and the need to seek justice for the victims.

"The third piece of that balance though is to respect constitutional rights, to respect privacy rights and to ensure that there's accountability for misuse, whether that be through increased criminal penalties."

What are Flock cameras and other ALPRs

Smith told lawmakers that automated license plate readers, or ALPRs, "are motion activated cameras that are paired with software."

"They capture specific vehicle information as the vehicle passes by," he said. "That information is limited to the license plate number and characteristics that would identify the make, model, color, body type and some other distinguishing features — for example, damage to a fender or a bumper sticker — and then the date and the time and the location of where that license plate read was captured.

"This no doubt is a valuable tool to as-

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Advocates of Medicaid expansion hold a rally in the Kansas Statehouse on March 15, 2023. The subject will be the Kansas Silver Haired Legislature's top priority going into the 2027 session. TOPEKA CAPITAL-JOURNAL FILE

SENIORS PUSH FOR MEDICAID EXPANSION

Matt Resnick
Special to The Capital-Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

For the Kansas Silver Haired Legislature, an entity composed of people 60 and older who work to identify issues important to seniors, Medicaid expansion is at the very top of its wishlist as the 2027 legislative session rapidly approaches.

A seismic political shift that upended the Kansas House GOP's supermajority could provide a crucial opening for the state to finally opt into full Medicaid expansion under the Affordable Care Act.

"There is such a strong feeling right now about health care for seniors," Chuck Schmidt, who serves as the Silver Haired Legislature's speaker pro tem, told The Capital-Journal.

Schmidt added that the issues the Silver Haired Legislature is advocating for "are what Kansans want," citing Fort Hays State's annual Kansas

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Nuclear power future in Kansas

Cost is prohibitive, but AI firms could foot bill

Jason Alatidd
Topeka Capital-Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

It is not currently economically viable for an electric utility to build new nuclear power plants in Kansas, a state regulatory official told lawmakers last month.

But it could happen anyway, especially if artificial intelligence companies foot the bill as part of AI data center developments.

"A new nuclear unit in the state of Kansas today is not economically viable, given the other alternatives that we have to produce electricity in our state," said Justin Grady, director of utilities at Kansas Corporation Commission.

"But there's a caveat in that if there was a hyperscaler large tech company that has very aggressive carbon-free energy production goals, and one of those entities wanted to backstop and underwrite the construction cost risk and the financing risk associated with the new nuclear unit, we do have the tools that can make that possible in the state of Kansas."

Grady's comments to lawmakers at an Oct. 27 meeting of a special committee on energy came during a day-long hearing dedicated to hearing multiple expert perspectives on nuclear

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