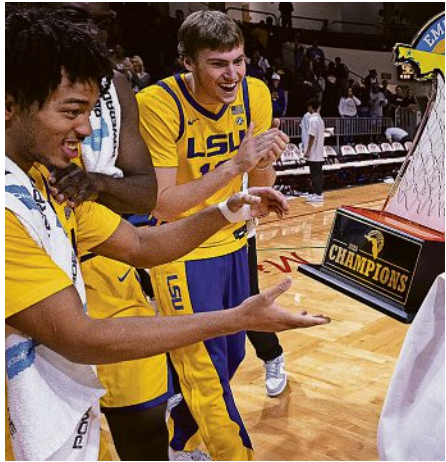
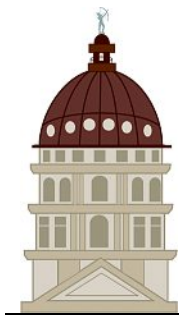




After multiple heart procedures, Gilhool is ready to play

SPORTS, 1B



THE TOPEKA CAPITAL-JOURNAL

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 16, 2026 | CJONLINE.COM

PART OF THE USA TODAY NETWORK

Are guardrails possible for AI data centers?

Kansas lawmakers clashing over approaches to utility costs

Matt Resnick
Special to The Capital-Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

As legislative candidates stake out various positions aimed at shielding Kansas residents from surging utility costs, driven by AI data centers, State-house lawmakers are pressing for more

detail when it comes to consumer guardrails.
“I don’t see specifics,” Sen. Brenda Dietrich, R-Topeka, told The Capital-Journal. “I think we all just need more information. We need to have an opportunity to study the issue to see what other communities and other states have done.”
“What did they learn from what they did that we can use to create those guardrails?”
Rep. Kirk Haskins, D-Topeka, said the encroachment of data centers in

Kansas “is moving quickly” and “there is a degree of misinformation” about the overall impact.
“A lot of the politicians, even myself, are not certain what the guardrails will be,” Haskins said. “There have been a lot of information sessions, but no one has really shared with me what needs to be in place.”
Haskins pointed to Google’s impending voyage into Kansas as it looks to construct a 1.7 million square-foot utility-scale data center campus along the south-central border in rural Barber

County.
Dubbed “Project Helium,” Barber County officials finalized the agreement with Google in late August.
“Barber County is an example in which there are no zoning requirements in the entire county,” Haskins said. “And, so, Google can go in and buy 2,000 acres from a farmer — pay top dollar and then some. And there is no way for communities to fight back on that, because there is no planning commission in that
See GUARDRAILS, Page 5A



Topeka City Council members listen to discussions about hiring a city auditor. STACEY SALDANHA-OLSON/THE CAPITAL-JOURNAL

Why city wants to hire an auditor

Individual would examine finances of departments

Stacey Saldanha-Olson
Topeka Capital-Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

Audits were a point of discussion during the 2025 city election season as several Topeka City Council candidates campaigned on looking further into the city’s finances.
About the same time, sitting councilwoman Christina Valdivia-Alcala started raising alarms over the financials of



Topeka City Councilwoman Christina Valdivia-Alcala has repeatedly called for a forensic audit. EVERT NELSON/THE CAPITAL-JOURNAL

the utility department. Since then, Valdivia-Alcala has frequently called for a forensic audit.
And now, the council has taken major steps toward getting an auditor.
Mayor Spencer Duncan said the search for a city auditor is just around the corner.
“We are still crafting the job description and scope of work for the auditor position,” Duncan said. “My plan is to then bring those to the city council for a signoff in November. Then we will post the job, with the goal of having that individual hired early next year.”
“That has always been the timeline since the position is not budgeted until
See AUDITOR, Page 7A

K-State president leaving for alma mater

Bryan Richardson
Topeka Capital-Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

Kansas State University President Richard Linton is leaving the institution to join Virginia Tech in the same role, becoming the state’s third public university president to leave since 2025.
The Virginia Tech Board of Visitors made the appointment Oct. 14.
“Although my professional responsibilities will take me elsewhere, my appreciation for Kansas State University and the people of Kansas will endure for a lifetime,” Linton said in a letter to the K-State community.
The outgoing president said in his letter that he will finish the fall semester at K-State and start with Virginia Tech on Jan. 11.
Linton, who became Kansas State’s 15th president in 2022, received his bachelor’s, master’s and doctorate degrees from Virginia Tech. During his introductory press conference, Linton said he’s returning to a university that gave him everything in his career.
“Returning to Blacksburg as president of this incredible university, for me, is a full circle moment,” he said.
Exiting Virginia Tech President Tim Sands told the board that his hopes were for the next president to be “someone who really understands what it means to be a Hokie.”
“You couldn’t have gotten a better individual than Richard Linton,” Sands said.
In a written statement, U.S. Sen. Jerry Moran, R-Kansas, praised Linton’s focus on expanding the university’s agriculture footprint and his work ethic, including how Linton served while undergoing cancer treatments in 2023.
“I’ve appreciated working alongside Dr. Linton and enjoyed our sunrise walks around campus as we discussed our shared goal of making certain Kansas is a place where students can get a quality education and build a meaningful career,” Moran said. “I think Rich has helped accomplish that, and I am grateful for his service to K-State and Kansas.”
Linton’s exit means half of Kansas’
See LEAVING, Page 3A

Subscriber-only eNewspaper

The eNewspaper is an electronic copy of your print newspaper. Enjoy every page by going to cjonline.com/enewspaper or scan this code on your mobile device. You will also find late news and sports in the bonus sections. Check it out today!



Volume 153 | No. 294
To subscribe 785-295-1133
©2026 \$2.00

