



## WEALTH POLICY, CIVIC ENGAGEMENT, AND YOU! WITH DAWN BUEHLER FRIENDS OF THE KAW

*Excerpts from a [series of CEP LIVE on Facebook events](#) that highlight policies impacting Kansas WEALTH and outline effective civic engagement strategies*

*WATER – ENERGY – AIR – LAND – TRANSPORTATION – HEALTH = KANSAS WEALTH*

### OVERVIEW

Dawn Buehler of Friends of the Kaw joined the Climate + Energy Project on March 13, 2018, to discuss policy priorities for the 2018 legislative session. Friends of the Kaw works to protect and preserve the Kansas River and its environs, which include water quality and wildlife habitat. The Kansas River flows 173 miles from its origins at Junction City to its meeting point with the Missouri River in Kansas City, Kansas. The watershed is 53,000 square miles and covers most of the upper half of Kansas plus the eastern portion of Colorado and most of middle Nebraska.

### TOP WEALTH POLICY ISSUES FOR FRIENDS OF THE KAW

- Friends of the Kaw has been working to educate its members and the community about [Senate Bill 405](#) (which was approved by Gov. Jeff Colyer on March 20). This bill clarified animal conversion units for **poultry facilities** with dry manure systems. Friends of the Kaw felt that this was a bill that would **negatively impact the Kansas River and our drinking water supply, and also affect air quality**. We support small farmers in Kansas and sustainable practices rather than this type of corporate agriculture.
- Friends of the Kaw also advocates for **full funding of the state's water plan**. Each year, \$8 million is supposed to transfer from the State General Fund and Economic Development Initiatives Fund to the state water plan fund. This hasn't happened since about 2010.

I worked on the plan for the Kansas River watershed basin, and one of the things that we did was come up with what it would cost within our area just to take care of the issues we are facing. Gov. Sam Brownback created the Blue Ribbon Task Force that [issued a report](#) in 2017. The task force came to the consensus that roughly \$55 million was needed in annual funding to implement the 50-year [Water Vision](#). The task force recommended that 1/10 of 1 percent of existing sales tax revenue be dedicated to the state water plan fund, which had broad-based support. Another recommendation was that until a larger funding source is secured, there should be the immediate fulfillment of the \$8 million in statutory demand transfers combined from the State General Fund and the Economic Development Initiatives Fund. Multiple stakeholders supported this proposal throughout the legislative session.

The Legislature partially implemented this recommendation with appropriation of an additional \$1.2 million during the 2017 session. A lot of us who advocate for water are really excited to have something to put into that fund, but **we need to restore it to the \$8 million annually**. We have a lot of water issues in Kansas. We have four reservoirs in the Kansas basin, and all of them are **filling with sediment** faster than we thought. We also have **harmful algae blooms** caused by nutrient loading. These are big challenges that we have to face.



The Climate + Energy Project seeks to dramatically reduce greenhouse gas emissions in America's Heartland through the ambitious deployment of energy efficiency and renewable energy, in policy and practice.

Join the Conversation at [climateandenergy.org](http://climateandenergy.org), on Facebook & Twitter @CEPHeartland

## CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND EFFECTIVE ADVOCACY TIPS FROM DAWN BUEHLER

- My first piece of advice is to **come to WEALTH Day!** It can be overwhelming to step into the Statehouse and try to navigate where to go. There will be plenty of people to help you at WEALTH Day. Come to WEALTH Day and **use it as a day of learning and advocacy.** It's a great opportunity to talk about all of the WEALTH topics. We will have legislators there for each WEALTH topic, so we will be able to talk about them in depth. You can also meet with your legislator or senator. A lot of them also are having community discussions now in their districts, so attend those if you can.
- **Be polite, research your topic, and find common ground.** I remind myself that we are all people working toward common goals. Legislators want to know what we think; we live in their district and they represent us. They generally are interested in what we have to say, so **don't be afraid to speak up and say you have a concern.**
- The first question I would ask my legislator is, **"Will you vote to fund the water plan this session?"** This is important to me and our organization and the Kansas River. I would want to find out if they are interested in that. I would then ask, **"When will we solve the education crisis** so that we can move on to other things that need our immediate attention?" We are focused in on the education funding case, and until we solve that it will be hard to move on to other issues that are still a priority. We have a lot of things to deal with but need to solve this problem as well.
- If you are worried about the chicken farms and how they will affect your county, **consider contacting your county commissioners.** Talk with them and express your concerns.

## WHAT YOU CAN DO

Learn about and advocate for Water, Energy, Air, Land, Transportation, and Health (WEALTH) in Kansas with the Climate + Energy Project and other sponsor organizations at WEALTH Day on March 15, 2018, at the Kansas Statehouse.

- Get up-to-date on current environmental advocacy
- Visit the Solutions Showcase
- Participate in WEALTH Forums throughout the day
- Enjoy the Local Foods Luncheon
- Sample new ideas at the Cookies and Conservation Conversation
- Meet with your legislators

Connect with CEP on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) and sign up for our [email updates](#).

**Join us for WEALTH Day on March 15<sup>th</sup> at the Kansas Statehouse!**

RSVP: <http://bit.ly.2018WEALTHDay>



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