



Dear Candidates for Governor,

Thank you for stepping forward to serve Kansas. Running for public office requires courage, sacrifice, and a sincere belief in our state's future. Each of you now has an opportunity to offer Kansans something larger than a campaign platform: a clear vision for where Kansas should be headed and how we will get there.

As I travel across the state and speak with business owners and job creators, one concern surfaces repeatedly: Kansas is at a crossroads.

We can continue along a path of modest growth and accept that other states will attract more people, investment, and opportunity. Or we can make forward-looking decisions that position Kansas for a new era of economic growth and greater prosperity for every region of our state.

The business community is looking for leadership willing to confront the structural challenges that have limited our progress. That includes examining how we prepare young Kansans for the workforce, whether our tax structure remains competitive, how we sustain critical resources such as water and energy, and whether government at every level is organized to serve Kansans as effectively and efficiently as possible.

These will not be easy conversations but avoiding them will not make the challenges disappear.

Kansas has added jobs over the past decade, but the size of our available workforce has changed very little. Employers across the state continue to struggle to find the people they need to grow. In an increasingly competitive market for talent, Kansas must become better at retaining our graduates, attracting new residents, and creating communities where people can build careers, raise families, and put down roots.

We have important strengths. Kansas offers an affordable cost of living, a central location, strong communities, and a regulatory environment that has ranked as the best overall economic, fiscal, and regulatory freedom (Kansas Chamber Bluebook, Chart 25). These advantages provide a solid foundation.

But advantages alone do not guarantee growth.

Kansas continues to face a high combined state and local sales tax rate, significant property tax concerns, and a complex system of local government. Even our cell phone taxes rank fifth highest according to the Tax Foundation. Our state has 105 counties and nearly 70 state and local public employees for every 1,000 residents. These figures should prompt a serious discussion about

duplication, efficiency, and whether public services are aligned with the needs of a modern and growing state.

The central question is not whether Kansas is a good place to live and do business. It is. The question is why Kansas has not grown at the pace of many of its competitors, and what the next governor will do differently.

States across the country are competing aggressively for workers, families, entrepreneurs, and investment. Several have paired business-friendly policies with strong population growth and clear long-term economic strategies. Kansas cannot assume that our traditional strengths will be enough to win that competition.

The next governor will have a unique opportunity and a responsibility to change our trajectory.

The business community is asking each candidate to present a measurable, long-term plan for Kansas built around four outcomes:

Growing our population.

Growing our economy.

Increasing prosperity and opportunity for Kansans.

Modernizing public services and eliminating unnecessary duplication.

What should Kansas look like in 10 or 20 years? How many more people should call our state home? How will we create the workforce our employers need? How will we increase incomes and economic opportunity? How will we deliver essential public services while protecting taxpayers? And what specific progress should Kansans expect by the end of your first term?

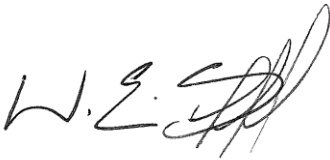
These questions require more than campaign promises. They require priorities, measurable goals, and the willingness to challenge systems that may no longer serve Kansas as well as they once did.

I urge each of you to think beyond the next election and define what a stronger and more prosperous Kansas looks like, from Colby to Kansas City, from Liberal to Leavenworth, and explain how you will lead us there.

The Kansas business community stands ready to work with leaders who are committed to meaningful growth and measurable results.

Kansas has the people, resources, and determination to compete with any state in the nation. What we need now is a shared direction and the leadership to pursue it.

When Kansas succeeds, we all succeed. Let's go win for a brighter future. Ad Astra Per Aspera.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "W.E. Stafford", with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

Sincerely,
Eric Stafford
President & CEO
Kansas Chamber of Commerce