

**BOYS STATE**  
OF KANSAS



AMERICAN LEGION

# Delegate Handbook

**2026 Session**



# Welcome to the 88<sup>th</sup> Session of The American Legion Boys State of Kansas

**May 31 – June 6, 2026**

## **PROGRAM INTRODUCTION**

Congratulations on your selection to attend the American Legion Boys State of Kansas. In the following pages we will acquaint you with a program that many past delegates have called one of the best experiences of their lives. You may have never heard about Boys State until now, unless your father, an older friend or your brother attended 'State.' The American Legion Boys State of Kansas is one of the best kept secrets around. Since 1937, over 60,000 young men like you have spent a week at Kansas Boys State learning about leadership and American government by creating their own virtual society.

Our mission during the week is to help you begin the development of individual political beliefs and to further the growth of leadership, responsibility, and self-esteem. Above all, the program offers different things to different people and **your efforts are crucial** to the kind of experience you will have. If you get involved, work hard, and treat others as you would like to be treated, Boys State can show you a glimpse of your capacity to achieve greatness. It can be one of the best experiences of your life if you accept the challenges and opportunities the program has to offer.

In writing this handbook, we have assumed that you are the type of person who plans to make the most out of the honor of being a Boys Stater. This handbook will answer most of the questions that you and your parents may have about the program, so read it thoroughly.

Our program site is [ksbstate.org](http://ksbstate.org). You may want to visit that site to review several past sessions. You will want to tell others of our program site so they can follow online during this year's session.

Should you have other questions, please contact us at the following:

The American Legion Boys State of Kansas

1314 SW Topeka Blvd.

Topeka, KS 66212

(785) 550-6492 (text enabled)

[info@ksbstate.org](mailto:info@ksbstate.org)

[ksbstate.org](http://ksbstate.org)

### **VERY IMPORTANT**

If you find you cannot attend Boys State, please notify us IMMEDIATELY! If you have any problems or questions, please contact us immediately.

### **THE AMERICAN LEGION**

Founded in 1919, The American Legion has been a moving force for the fair treatment of our country's veterans, their families, and disabled veterans. With more than 3 million members in the United States and seven foreign countries, The American Legion is the largest organization for veterans in the world. Members of the Legion are honorably discharged men and women who served their country on active duty in the Armed Forces of the U.S.

The American Legion was the author of the GI Bill of Rights, which has benefited millions of service personnel since its passage in 1944. They also conduct programs designed to benefit the youth of America. Notable among these programs are American Legion Baseball, American Legion Boys State and Boys Nation, American Legion High School Oratorical Contest, and the American Legion Americanism and Government contests.

Boys State was founded by the American Legion in 1935 and remains a premier youth program. The program in Kansas, which is conducted by the American Legion Department of Kansas, was founded in 1937.

### **BOYS STATE HISTORY**

Legionnaires Hayes Kennedy and Harold L. Card, both educators and members of the American Legion Department of Illinois, formulated the American Legion Boys State program in 1935. They wanted American youth to develop a better understanding of our governmental system and instill a sense of ownership that would make them better people and better citizens and create a better America.

The format of Boys State was laid out by Card and fashioned from a method he successfully employed in earlier years to properly organize and conduct a Boy Scout camp. Shorthanded on staff, he permitted the Scouts to govern themselves by holding elections for mayor and city council — which in turn appointed other city officials. Card quickly found that the Scouts were so enthused in carrying out their city duties that they almost neglected their scouting assignments. This first Boys State was conducted on the Illinois State Fairgrounds in June 1935.

Two years later, 200 young men assembled at Municipal University of Wichita (now Wichita State University) for the inaugural American Legion Boys State of Kansas. The program moved to Wichita North High School in 1939. The program was also held at Wichita West High School until 1963 when Boys State moved to the University of Kansas in Lawrence. In 1992, the program moved to its present location at Kansas State University in Manhattan.

There have been many landmark events in the evolution of the Kansas Boys State program. Perhaps the strongest evidence of this heritage is the good reputation built by the delegates who participate

each year.

Today's Boys State program is a streamlined version of more than 85 years of successful sessions. The program has adapted to changing times, but many aspects of the program have been retained for their ceremonial and historical significance.

### **WHAT IS BOYS STATE TO YOU?**

Boys State is a political exercise. It simulates elections, political parties, and state and local governments.

Boys State is an exercise in leading as well as following others. Elections at Boys State are more than just choosing government officials. Elections are an opportunity to show your ability to lead under pressure and to show your character in the face of victory or defeat. Boys State will test your skills in solving problems and working effectively within a team.

Boys State is an opportunity to gain pride and respect for our form of government and the price paid by people to preserve democracy. Marcus McNeal, a 2008 delegate from Wichita, a Boys Nation Senator, and former Kansas Boys State staff member writes:

"My experience at Boys State of Kansas was nothing short of phenomenal. I started the week out nervous because I didn't know what really to expect, and it went beyond what I expected. The beginning of the week was campaigning for state positions. It really gave me an insight on the actual campaign process itself and showed me that just because I didn't raise much money in the primaries that I could still come out on top beating people who raised a ton of money from the different special interest groups and individuals. The second half of the week was an eye-opening experience for me, about how quickly people can get mad at their elected officials. As Secretary of State, I had to reform the voting in the counties. I was able to effectively get my message across to hundreds of people. I got an insight on the workings of the actual state government and election process. Finally, I was elected to be one of the Boys State of Kansas senators to go to Boys Nation."

Boys State is also an opportunity to express artistic and athletic talents. Delegates are encouraged to take part in the Boys State band, chorus, and talent show. The band and the chorus rehearse daily, led by a member of the K-State staff, coming together for an evening of entertainment. Actors, singers, musicians, and comedians perform at the annual talent show, one of the favorite yearly events. Athletics are encouraged during organized daily recreation. Delegates are invited to participate in several competitive team sports as well as individual sports.

Boys State offers an opportunity to meet people who represent Kansas' diversity in heritage and culture. Moreover, many delegates develop friendships that last a lifetime. After Boys State, you may recognize that many of your fellow delegates go on to become successful in college, politics, business, and other areas of life.

So, what have you gotten yourself into? We hope that you can now see that the answer to that question depends upon your interests. Boys State has meant something different to each of the 60,000-plus delegates who have preceded you.

Boys State offers opportunities to understand government, to exercise leadership, to understand patriotism, to express oneself artistically and to meet new people. Boys State cannot be all things to all people. However, more than 80 years of history and success has led the American Legion, and all of those who help make this program possible, to believe that Boys State offers something meaningful and important to the future of Kansas and to the future of America.

## **PROGRAM CHECK-IN AND ATTENDANCE**

Check-in for all delegates is on Sunday, May 31, 2026, from 10:00 to 11:00 AM. More information on where to park when you arrive and your room assignment will be provided prior to your arrival. Specific info on where to enter the residence hall and where to park a vehicle if you plan to leave it on campus for the duration of the week will also be provided by staff as part of the check-in process.

**YOU ARE HIGHLY ENCOURAGED TO EAT LUNCH *BEFORE* CHECKING IN.** The first meal of the week will be dinner Sunday night. Consider signing up and grabbing a delicious meal prior to check in at the Kramer Dining Center! This must be paid for in advance or cash on arrival. If you and/or your family would like to have brunch/lunch at Kramer, here's the link for reservations/payment:

[Pre-check-in Brunch/Lunch at Kramer](#)

If you plan on leaving your vehicle at Boys State, please follow this link to reserve a parking pass:

[Stater Weeklong Parking Pass Request.](#)

You will park your vehicle in a campus parking lot that is patrolled by campus police and is under video surveillance. You will **not** have access to your car during the week of Boys State.

If special circumstances arise that cause you to miss a portion of State, arrive late or need to leave early, this must be arranged by a parent or guardian through a link sent to them.

## **Special Events**

**Flag Retirement Ceremony** — American Legion Post 17 from Manhattan performs an official American Legion Flag retirement ceremony of an unserviceable U.S. flag.

**Talent Show** — The talent show is scheduled for Wednesday evening and is one of the highlights of the week. A piano will be furnished. If you need any other particulars for your act, bring them along. In the past, we have had solos, ensembles, magicians, dramatic interpretations, comic acts and many surprises. Tryouts for the Talent Show are on your Stater Schedule. If you can't make the tryouts, speak with your City Counselor and a tryout will be arranged.

**Band** — You are encouraged to participate in the Boys State Band. Personnel from the K-State Band Department lead the daily rehearsal. Music is typically from the K-State pep band repertoire. ***You will need to bring your own instrument.*** You will also get a feel for what participating in a university music program entails.

**Chorus** — You are encouraged to participate in the Boys State Chorus. Personnel from the K-State Choral Department lead the daily rehearsal. Music varies but is specifically arranged for men's chorus. You will also get a feel for what participating in a university music program entails.

*(Band and Chorus meet at the same time, so you may only participate in one or the other; however, you can be in the Band or Chorus and be eligible for the Talent Show.)*

***Family and friends are welcome to join us for these events!***

## COMPETITIVE ATHLETICS

Recreation will be at the K-State Recreation Center. We offer five organized team sports: Ultimate Frisbee, soccer, basketball, volleyball, and softball. You will play against other Boys State counties. The competition is fierce, but fun. We supply basketball, volleyball, and softball equipment — except that you need to bring your own baseball/softball glove. The sign-up for teams takes place on your residence hall floor with your counselors. We also have table tennis, tennis, and badminton. If you want to participate, bring the appropriate equipment.

## COLOR GUARD AND FLAG DETAIL

Delegates from each county at Boys State will be selected by their county counselor to represent their county in the color guard and flag detail. This team will care for the colors at all official Boys State functions. Those interested should contact their county counselor at the first county meeting on Sunday afternoon.

**BOYS NATION** — The Boys State experience will continue to the national stage for two delegates who are elected as Boys Nation Senators. Two representatives from each of the Boys State programs represent their state at Boys Nation in Washington, D.C. Young leaders receive an all-expense paid education in the structure and function of the federal government. Eligibility requirements include:

1. Entering your senior year of high school in Fall 2026
2. Available for the full program dates of July 17 to July 25, 2026
3. Are a U.S. citizen.

Two alternates are selected if a delegate is unable to attend.

Most programs have the program staff leadership hand-select the senators. In Kansas, we feel the program is best represented at Boys Nation through an election by the Staters. The process, procedures, and election timing will be a part of your orientation and will be on your schedule.

## WHAT YOU SHOULD BRING

We encourage you to bring enough clean clothes to last one week without laundry. Bring a light jacket in case of rain or cool weather. For the day's activities, you will want to wear comfortable clothes — shorts, t-shirts, jeans, etc. You will be given two Boys State t-shirts at check-in, which are already paid for. The schedule will note when these shirts are required to be worn. Remember to bring athletic wear for softball, soccer, basketball, and other physical activities. Any group equipment, such as a volleyball, is provided. Personal equipment, like baseball/softball gloves, soccer cleats or a tennis racket, are not provided and should be brought with you.

Boys State provides towels and bedding, but feel free to bring your own pillow if you wish. You will need to bring your own personal items: shaving kit, soap, shampoo, deodorant, etc.

Bring several pencils and pens, a highlighter, notepad or notebook.

We use smartphones for voting and viewing other information. You are asked to bring your smartphone, if you are able to. You will be instructed when you should and should NOT use your phone. If you do not have a smartphone, you will be provided an alternative method for those voting situations. **Not having a smartphone will not diminish your experience in any way.**

At Boys State, you may incur some expenses, but you should bring a minimal amount of cash. Debit and Credit cards are usable for virtually all needs. Delegates have access to soda and vending machines and souvenirs at the Quik Cats convenience store. **You will not buy any campaign materials with your own money. You can only use Boys State dollars to buy these items.** Please

ask a counselor or visit the office in the Kramer Conference Center for assistance if you have a money problem or other special circumstances.

### **WHAT YOU SHOULD NOT BRING**

You should not bring extremely valuable items with you to Boys State. You will not be supplied with a key to your room. The room remains unlocked throughout the week. ***Boys State is not responsible for missing, lost, or stolen items.***

We do not allow illegal drug or alcohol use during State. If you are caught using or in possession of any of these, we have the option of calling your parents and sending you home immediately. If this happens, we will inform your sponsor and high school why you were sent home and why their fees will **NOT** be refunded.

### **DELEGATE BEHAVIOR AND SOCIAL CONTRACT**

As a representative of your family, school, and community, we expect you to be respectful of all people while at Boys State. You will be around other members of the KSU and American Legion communities as well as local, state, and national leaders. To help with this, all delegates and staff members will be held to the same social contract. We require that you view and digitally sign this agreement:

[2026 Social Contract](#)

### **THE LAYOUT OF STATE**

At State, you will be assigned to a city made up of all the delegates on the same residence hall wing. Together, the wings on your floor create a county. There are five counties that make up the State. Most activities will revolve around your city and county.

You will also be assigned to a fictional political party (Nationalist or Federalist) in which you will help develop a party platform and nominate candidates for state elected offices. You will also be assigned a fictitious occupation for the purposes of our simulation.

You will be housed in an air-conditioned room in Goodnow Hall. There are three meals per day, and you will eat them with your county in the Kramer Dining Center. There are many dining choices at each meal. Please let the staff know of any dietary restrictions. Your roommate will be assigned based on several factors, so you are not able to request a specific roommate.

We do “march” at the American Legion Boys State of Kansas so bring walking shoes (not flip-flops). It is an efficient and timely way to move hundreds of people from point A to point B. It is closer to walking together and stepping in time rather than strict, always-cut-a-square-corner marching. Please keep an open mind — many really enjoy it...oh, bring comfortable walking shoes (have we mentioned that?!)

### **OVERVIEW OF OFFICES**

*(Note: some of these numbers may fluctuate once our session begins based on the total enrollment)*

#### **Political Parties**

Party Leaders 1 per party / per county

#### **Media Staff**

*The Delegate*, Debate Committee 2 per county

#### **City Council**

City Council Members 5 per city

#### **County Commission**

County Commissioners 4 per county

## **County District Court**

Court Officials 6 per county

## **Highway Patrol**

State Trooper 2 per county

## **STATE GOVERNMENT – ELECTED POSITIONS**

Our Office Officials (noted with \* below) are only open to delegates who have completed their junior year of high school.

### **Governor\***

Open to all applicants

### **Lieutenant Governor\***

Lt. Gov will run with the governor candidate after the party nomination.  
(The two nominees compete in the general election as a team.)

### **Secretary of State\***

Elected within each party; competes in general election

### **Attorney General\***

Elected within each party; competes in general election

### **State Treasurer\***

Elected within each party; competes in general election

### **State Senators**

2 elected per county (1 per city)

### **State Representatives**

6 elected per county

## **STATE GOVERNMENT – APPOINTED POSITIONS**

### **Supreme Court Justices**

Five appointed by the governor Per Kansas Boys State statute, all persons appointed to the Supreme Court must be a district court judge, district attorney or the opposing governor candidate.

### **Office of the Governor and Lieutenant Governor**

Legislative Liaison 1 each, appointed by the Governor and Lt. Governor

### **Office of the Secretary of State**

Assistant Secretary of State 1 appointed by the Secretary of State

### **Office of the Attorney General**

Assistant Attorney General 1 appointed by Attorney General

### **Office of the State Treasurer**

Assistant State Treasurer 1 appointed by State Treasurer

### **State Departments**

***Each Department is headed by a Secretary*** - 1 per department

Department of Commerce and Transportation

Department of Education, Culture, and Tourism

Department of Natural Resources and Public Utilities

## **BOYS STATE POSITIONS**

Delegates can participate in the political parties, The Boys State newspaper (*The Delegate*), or city, county, and state governments. Each citizen will either be elected to or appointed to participate in one of these positions. Below are brief descriptions of the positions available and how each position is filled.

**POLITICAL PARTIES** — The two parties are run by party leaders. Fellow party members elect one party leader from each political party on Sunday. The leaders write the party platform, solicit election contributions, promote party candidates, and organize the political fair and caucus on Monday.

**MEDIA STAFF** — The Boys State newspaper, *The Delegate*, is published daily. Two media staff members are elected from each county on Sunday. They perform all management duties, including reporting, editing, layout and advertising sales for all services; plus, they host the State Candidates' Debate.

**CITY COUNCIL** — Each city government is composed of elected officials. These officials form a governing council, which may include a mayor, a city manager, a city clerk, and a city treasurer, depending on how the members of the council choose to assign duties and titles.

They are elected at the first city meeting on Sunday. The city officials duties include preparing the city budget, passing ordinances, zoning property, hiring teachers and police, promoting the local economy, testifying before state departments, solving city government projects and taking any needed legal actions.

**COUNTY COMMISSION** — Similar to the cities, county governments are composed of elected county officials. These officials form a county commission which may include county commissioners, a county clerk, a county treasurer, and a county administrator, depending on how the members of the commission choose to assign duties and titles. They are elected at the first county meeting on Sunday. Their duties include promoting city cooperation and the county economy, preparing a county budget, solving county government projects, and representing the interests of the county to state departments, the Governor, and the Legislature.

**COUNTY DISTRICT COURT** — Each county has a district court that reviews cases, holds trials, makes decisions and issues orders. District court officials are elected on Sunday.

**STATE** — The state government has three branches: executive, legislative and judicial. It is composed of elected officials and appointed officials.

**STATE EXECUTIVE BRANCH** — This branch is composed of five chief executive officers: Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Secretary of State, Attorney General, and State Treasurer. Delegates running for state offices first seek the nomination of their party in the primary election on Monday. Gubernatorial candidates are nominated by their respective party. The Gubernatorial Debate is hosted by the Kansas Boys State media on Tuesday afternoon. The general election follows this debate. State officers perform a variety of activities, including meeting with constituents and department members, issuing executive policies, preparing the state budget, testifying before the legislature and other items of interest to the office.

Appointed officials (those not elected during Tuesday's General Election) are announced on Tuesday

evening and help the executive officials perform their duties. They also hold hearings before cities and counties, work with the legislature and make policy recommendations.

**STATE LEGISLATURE** — House Representatives and State Senators from each county make up the Kansas Boys State legislature. Each is elected within their county on Sunday evening. They work on a budget, hold hearings, write legislation, and pass state laws.

**STATE JUDICIAL BRANCH** — Seven justices, appointed on Wednesday by the Governor, make up the Kansas Boys State Supreme Court. They review district court decisions, hear oral arguments, interpret the law, and issue written rulings.

### **DAILY GOVERNMENT PROJECTS**

Projects guide the various levels of government and the special interest groups through many of the problems faced by their counterparts in the real Kansas government. They often require multiple governments at various levels to work together to solve a problem devised by Kansas Boys State Executive Staff.

The purpose of government projects is to demonstrate:

- The complexity of modern political problems.
- That government actions may have unplanned and unexpected economic and social consequences.
- How easy it is for opposing interests to produce gridlock.
- That government action may be the only solution to a specific program.
- The impact that state, county, and city governments can have on each other.
- That there is usually no completely right or wrong answer to many problems.

Most importantly, government projects are designed to show each citizen in Kansas Boys State that they can solve problems and help improve society. Typical government project topics include cultural diversity, the relationship between mankind and the environment, the problems facing rural communities, economic development, government funding of the arts, addressing crime, freedom of speech, healthcare, university admissions, water conservation, etc.

Government projects may require delegates to lobby legislators, testify before department hearings, meet with the Governor, or take legal action against a branch of the government.

Government projects require actions that affect the lives of the delegates. For example, if a department builds a toxic waste site in your city, everyone's property values will fall. Sometimes government officials act before they know the full effects they may have on the private sector. The computer simulated society at Kansas Boys State helps you quickly learn the impact of your decisions.

### **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ's)**

*If I am a member of the Kansas Boys State media can I run for another office?*

No, media staff members are full-time positions, and they may **not** seek another office.

*If I am elected to an office, may I resign to take another office?*

On Sunday, all delegates will be elected to a position. Anyone who is interested in running for a state office will have the chance to declare their interest on Monday. If you are elected to a state office, you will then have to resign your original elected position.

### *How do I finance my campaign?*

Obtaining contributions from other delegates is one way to finance your campaign. You should not bring any campaign material with you. It can all be bought with Kansas Boys State dollars once you arrive. (See section on Elections and Financing).

### **ELECTIONS AND FINANCING**

While at Kansas Boys State, you will campaign for one of several elected offices. Before you get to Boys State, you should give some thought as to how you wish to compete for these offices. Most candidates use fliers, posters, and ads in the newspaper for campaign material. Kansas Boys State has an independent monetary system that uses Boys State dollars. There is no exchange rate between real currency and Boys State dollars. Boys State dollars are accumulated through fundraising campaigns and from contributions by special interest groups. **You may not bring your own campaign materials from home.** Our goal is to keep everything on a level playing field.

The following campaign rules are provided to make the elections as fair as possible, prevent damage to university property and protect moral standards:

- Candidates may not prepare campaign literature before their arrival to Kansas Boys State.  
**Come with ideas, not finished products.**
- Before any campaign material may be posted, displayed, or otherwise used, the candidate must pay for the material in Boys State dollars. An official seal placed on the front of all campaign material acknowledges payment has been made. Payment is made and seals are obtained from the main Boys State Banking Center.
- No candidate or other person acting on his behalf may remove, destroy or otherwise damage another candidate's campaign materials.
- No candidate or other person acting on his behalf shall use any campaign material that harms or damages any building, surface, sidewalk, or other property.
- No candidate or other person acting on his behalf shall use chalk or other semi-permanent materials to write directly on any surface, building or sidewalk.
- Posters and other campaign materials may only be posted by using either masking tape or non adhesive methods.
- No campaign materials may contain offensive or obscene images, words, or phrases. The American Legion Boys State of Kansas reserves the right to judge material based on its own criteria. In other words: if you have a doubt, leave it out.

### **SAMSUNG COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIP**

One delegate from The American Legion Boys State of Kansas will receive a \$1,250 college scholarship. The entire application process is online at: [Samsung Scholarship Application](#). It must be received by 11:59 p.m. on May 31, 2026. It is better not to wait to complete the application. If eligible and interested, fill it out NOW!

To be eligible, you must have just completed your junior year of high school and be a direct descendant (son, grandson, great-grandson, legally adopted child) of a military veteran. A DD-214 discharge form is required as part of the application process. Locating this discharge form can sometimes take time, so it's better to begin early.

The winner from the Kansas Boys State session advances to regional and national competition for larger awards.

### **MAIL (aka Snail-Mail)**

Friends and family members who want to mail letters/cards/packages to delegates should address the envelope using the following format:

<Your Name>  
c/o American Legion Boys State of Kansas  
Kramer Dining Center  
Kansas State University  
Manhattan, KS 66506

Our office phone number the week of state is: (785) 550-6492. We will take a message and get that message to the intended party.

### **DELEGATES WITH SPECIAL NEEDS**

Any delegate with special needs, such as hearing impairment or physical disability, should note these needs in the online medical authorization form (link sent to parents/guardians). Kansas Boys State will provide use of elevators and special room accommodations, if necessary. If a delegate needs assistance to participate, including sign-language translation, the sponsoring organization must furnish a full-time aide to assist that student. All expenses for the aide, including transportation, meals, and lodging, must be assumed by the sponsoring organization. The American Legion Boys State of Kansas Executive Director may choose to waive or lessen the cost of meals and lodging for the aide. The American Legion Boys State of Kansas must be assured that proper insurance is provided for the handicapped student and aide. Any additional premiums will be assumed by the sponsoring organization.

We are all volunteers and most of us were Staters ourselves. We are here to help you have the best week possible! If you have any questions, concerns, comments, etc., please don't hesitate to bring it up. We've all had our lives changed by our Boys State experience. Our goal is for you to be able to proudly say that your life was changed by being a Boys Stater!

Revised 5/9/2026 88<sup>th</sup> Session