

MICHAEL AUSTIN, M.A.

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Profile

Economist, policy advisor, and educator with over a decade of experience delivering actionable insights and practical solutions for state and local leaders, businesses, and students. Combines strong academic training with hands-on experience shaping tax, budget, and economic policy at the highest levels of the Kansas state government.

Experience

Knowledge & Decisions Economic Consulting, Kansas, 2021 to Present

President/Owner

- Deliver expert economic analysis and public policy consulting for government entities, businesses, and nonprofits.
- Utilize IMPACT modeling and other advanced tools to assess economic development projects and shape regional policy recommendations.

Americans for Prosperity – Kansas Chapter, Kansas, 2022 to Present

Coalitions and Legislative Director

- Lead legislative engagement and public policy outreach to foster economic well-being and government accountability.
- Deliver public talks, policy briefings, and coordinate coalition-building campaigns statewide.

State Financial Officers Foundation, Kansas, 2022 to 2023

Research Fellow

- Conducted research for a national network of State Treasurers, Auditors, and Financial Officers on fiscal policy and state economic issues.

Kansas Policy Institute, Wichita, Kansas, 2018 to 2021

Director, Center for Entrepreneurial Government

- Produced economic research, tax reform recommendations, and policy analysis for Kansas lawmakers and local officials.
- Authored publications addressing government spending, healthcare, tax structures, and budget reform.

Kansas Department of Revenue, Topeka, Kansas, 2017 to 2019

Chief Economist

- Served as Chief Economic Advisor to two Kansas Governors.
- Led fiscal analysis for state tax and budget legislation, including the Kansas Tax Itemization Act.

- Supervised economists, auditors, and legal staff in preparing economic impact reports and legislative testimony.

The Show-Me Institute, St. Louis, Missouri, 2016 to 2017

Tax Policy Analyst

- Wrote tax and budget policies with a focus on boosting economic growth in Missouri.

Legislative & Policy Contributions

- **Kansas Tax Itemization Act (2018)** — Co-authored fiscal analysis that shaped state response to federal tax reform.
- **Automatic Continuing Appropriations (2022)** — Drafted policy that ensures uninterrupted government operations during budget stalemates.
- **Regulatory Sandboxes (2023)** — Drafted policy enabling Kansas businesses to innovate in a reduced regulatory environment.
- **Moved Kansas to Two Income Tax Brackets (2024)** — Drafted and provided economic analysis supporting income tax consolidation and simplification during the Special Session.
- **Moved Kansas to A Single Income Tax Bracket (2025)** — Drafted policy and advised lawmakers on transitioning Kansas toward a single income tax rate.

Affiliations

1. State Financial Officers Foundation, 2022/2023 **Research Fellow**
2. American Enterprise Institute, 2019 **Emerging Poverty Scholar**
3. Kansas Chamber of Commerce, 2022 **Emerging Leader**
4. American Enterprise Institute, 2020 Leadership Network – Millennial Cohort, 2020 – Present
5. National Center for Public Policy Research, **Project 21 Ambassador**
6. KU Black Alumni Network, 2021 **Emerging Leader**
7. Heritage Foundation, Project 2025 **Coalition Partner on the U.S. Treasury**
8. Heritage Foundation, Project 2025 **Coalition Partner with the U.S. Department of Education**
9. Heritage Foundation, Project 2025 **Coalition Partner on the U.S. Federal Reserve System**
10. America's Future, 2025 **LEAD Fellow**

Education

M.A. Economics with Honors, University of Kansas, May 2016

Thesis: "Fiscal Policy Implications on Small Business Decisions: An Application to the Kansas Income Tax Initiative"

B.B.A. Business Management and Economics, Washburn University, May 2012

Graduated as "School of Business Scholar"

Select Policy Publications

1. Austin, M. (2018). *Estimated Impact of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act*. Topeka, Kansas: Kansas Department of Revenue.
2. Austin, M. (2020). *2020 Green Book: Fact Book exploring the relationship between the size of government and economic growth*. Wichita, Kansas: Kansas Policy Institute.
3. Austin, M. (2020). *Comparing County Budgets to Address Shortfalls, Drive Efficiency, and Spur Opportunity*. Wichita, Kansas: Kansas Policy Institute.
4. Austin, M. (2021). *2021 Green Book: Fact Book exploring the relationship between the size of government*. Wichita, Kansas: Kansas Policy Institute.
5. Austin, M. (2021). *Balanced Budget Plan: Delivers Services, Saves Taxpayers to Make Economic Growth, Recession Resiliency, and Tax Reform Attainable*. Wichita, Kansas: Kansas Policy Institute.
6. Austin, M. (2023, September 12). Regulatory Sandbox: Unleashing Topeka's Business Potential in a Safe Playground. *TK Business Magazine*.
7. Austin, M., & Evans, G. (2023). *A Review of Kansas' Performance-Based Budgeting*. Americans for Prosperity. Retrieved from <https://kansaspolicy.org/a-review-of-kansas-performance-based-budgeting/>
8. Austin, M. (2024, November 14). A Secret Ingredient for Economic Growth: Spending Limits. *TK Business Magazine*.
9. Frost, R., & Austin, M. (2020, March 13). *Kansas Shouldn't Push Pension Debt Into Future So It Can Spend More Today*. Retrieved from Reason Foundation: <https://reason.org/commentary/kansas-shouldnt-push-pension-debt-into-future-so-it-can-spend-more-today/>

Popular Commentaries/Mentions

Featured in:

Bloomberg Tax, The Washington Times, NEWSMAX, NPR, Associated Press, The Wichita Eagle, The Topeka Capital-Journal, Kansas City Star, KAKE-TV, KSN-TV, KSNT, KCPT, and others.

Honors and Awards

1. African American Leadership Council of Topeka, KS, Leadership Award, 2007
2. Office of the Kansas Governor, Research Fellowship, 2014
3. Kansas Black Republican Council, The Bolden Award for Courage, 2023

Teaching Experience

Washburn University, Topeka, Kansas
Lecturer, School of Business

2018 to Present

- Teach Principles of Microeconomics and Intro to Economics to undergraduate students, focusing on real-world applications and critical thinking.
- Consistently rated above 4.0 on a 5-point scale for teaching effectiveness, clarity, and student engagement.

Professional Speaking Engagements

Kansas County Treasurers Association, Keynote, "American Rescue Plan Act of 2021: Regulation & Guidance for Kansas County Treasurers," 2021.

Regional Economic Modeling Inc., Panel Expert, "Tax Policy in a High-Inflation Economy," 2022

Wyandotte Unified Government, Panel Expert, "Wyandotte County Forward Outlook," 2022

Kansas Republican Party, Panel Expert, "School Choice and the Education Revolution," 2023

Kansas Center Right Coalition, Panel Expert, "State Flat Tax Discussion with Grover Norquist," 2023

State Financial Officers Foundation, Panel Expert, "U.S. Economic Environment and Challenges for States," Spring 2023

Service

Washburn University (School of Business Advisor), 2020 to Present

U.S. Commission on Civil Rights (Kansas Advisor), 2020 to Present

Kansas Republican Party (Executive Board Member), 2022 to Present

Douglas County Black Republican Council (Chairman of Executive Board), 2022 to Present

Kansas Black Republican Council (Chairman of Executive Board), 2023 to Present

Kansas CASA (Judge of the Volunteer of the Year Program), 2023 to Present

Corpus Christi Catholic Parish (Business Advisory Board Member), 2023 to Present

Corpus Christi Catholic Parish (Endowment Board Member), 2023 to Present

Kansas Republican Party (Chair – Finance & Capital Assets Committee), 2025 to Present

References

Available upon request