

Who was the Most Popular Governor in Kansas History – Long version

By Jeff Chapman

A recent article mentioning current Kansas Governor Laura Kelly's popularity hovering around 62% made me wonder (sorry, Ned); Who have been the most popular Kansas Governors of all time and why? Is there one single most popular Governor? Does it mean popular only when they are in the seat or a lifetime of popularity? Let's dive in.

I didn't use the "Would I have a beer with that Governor? Or Would I trust that Governor with my kids? Approach. I actually did some research.

In my original non-researched list, I thought this might be an easy task. Certainly, one Governor stands out though on the other (unpopular) side, Sam Brownback, who may be among the least popular if not THE least popular Governor in Kansas history, but that's a whole other ("nother," in my family dialect) story. I have always known that Governor Bill Graves from my hometown was well liked and is a great friend today so I assumed he might be the guy. Personally, I always liked Governors Bill Avery (my personal favorite) and Mike Hayden (my brother's personal favorite) but knew they probably wouldn't be the most popular by Kansans because they weren't re-elected.

Therefore, an obvious start to the fair process was to look at all the Governors that were re-elected to a second term, but that didn't necessarily mean that they maintained popularity. Just because someone served 2 terms doesn't mean the one-termers weren't also quite popular, so this proved to be more difficult to determine than I thought.

I did this the old-fashioned way. I read hours and hours of history. The best resource for this information was from the Kansas State Historical Society, and the National Governors Association websites.

The pool of candidates; There have been 54 Kansas Top Executives.

Here's how I eliminated more than half. Out are the territorial governors, anyone who served less than a full term regardless of the reason, anyone who lost re-election (except 1) anyone who lost more times than they won in other elections, anyone involved in scandals, impeachment or were deemed unpopular through polling.

It should be noted that after a 1972 constitutional amendment established four-year terms and limited governors to two consecutive terms. Prior to the mid-1970s governors served unlimited two-year terms, though only one individual was re-elected a 3rd or 4th time..

This made comparing apples to apples a bit harder, but bear with me, the best ones easily surfaced.

Who was the Most Popular Governor in Kansas History – Long version

By Jeff Chapman

Serving Kansas before 1900 were 6 governors that served multiple terms and were popular, but they were also on the side of the abolitionists and being a free state which dominated Kansas politics at the time. In other words, you were going to be popular in Kansas regardless if you were on the side of anti-slavery.

Jumping to the not-so-popular side, **Sam Brownback** served during two consecutive terms (2011–2018), but he resigned in his second term to take a diplomatic post, so he did not complete the full eight years, and he left very unpopular, so as I have mentioned he is out of contention. Brownback's economic bust, the "Kansas Experiment" hurt his political capital and anyone associated with his administration, one could say even still. On a personal level. I like Sam. He is a very nice person.

In reviewing favorability polling, there haven't been consistent polling efforts historically and certainly nothing before 1962. The only consistent numbers to compare is the vote percentage received for the second term, but even that statistic leaves room for questions. While Brownback was elected twice, he left office at 27% in favorability, which is the lowest on record. On the high side **Bill Graves** left office with 78% favorability and reached a high point of 82%, but does that make him the most popular Governor of all time? Maybe.

Looking at the re-election numbers of those in office and the averages of their two elections are interesting: Here's how the top few rank by highest percentage in a single election:

- All who had individual election results above 60%; Graves 73.4, Crawford 70.38, Harvey 68.22, Allen 66.39, Harvey 66.37, Osborn 65.79, Schoeppel 65.73, Brownback 63.28, R Docking 62, Crawford 61.31, Graves 61.1, Capper 60.77.
- Highest Average Multiple Elections: All above 60%; Harvey 67.30, Graves 67.25, Crawford 65.85, Allen 62.42, Schoeppel 61.20, Osborn 61.10,

Here are some additional popularity qualifying facts: At least three Kansas Governors were elected to the U.S. Congress after serving as governor: **Frank Carlson, Clyde Martin Reed,** and **Andrew Frank Schoeppel.**

After serving as governor, **Alf Landon** ran for President of the United States in 1936 and lost in a landslide to Franklin D. Roosevelt. He didn't even carry the State of Kansas. **Anderson, Jr.** After completing his terms, he returned to private law practice but unsuccessfully sought his party's nomination for governor a third time in 1972. So that makes these Governors popularity seem less just because they went out of public life as losers. Is that fair to Alf Landon who lost to FDR, but was an otherwise well-known Kansan? Maybe not.

Who was the Most Popular Governor in Kansas History – Long version

By Jeff Chapman

Before we get to the top ten and why, there are **3** historic and **4** modern Governors that are *honorable mentions* that didn't make my **Top Ten Most Popular Kansas Governors of All Time** list.

As mentioned above Governors Crawford, Harvey, and Osborn were extremely popular, but at a time when Kansas was getting started and becoming a growing free state. Their elections were landslides with over 60% victories, but the opposition was pro-slavery, or anti-free, so it skews the results. You could say by those numbers and the time that they were the two or three most popular Governors of all time, but I am throwing them out as **OUTSTANDING** historical honorable mentions.



Governor Crawford

- **Samuel J. Crawford- 1865-1868** Samuel Crawford's popularity can be inferred from his political success and long tenure in public service: Crawford was elected as the third Governor of Kansas in 1864 at the young age of 29 and was re-elected for a second term in 1866. He was a respected Union Army officer during the Civil War, attaining the rank of brevet brigadier general and being complimented in general orders for gallant services in various battles. He resigned his governorship toward the end of his second term to take command of the 19th Kansas Regiment during the Plains Indian Wars, a move that suggests he maintained a strong public mandate. After leaving the governorship, Crawford held the highly remunerative position of state agent for an impressive fourteen years under five different governors. He successfully recovered significant amounts of money and land for the state in claims against the federal government. Crawford County, Kansas, was named in his honor in 1867, His book *Kansas in the '60s* also attracted much attention as a key picture of early Kansas history. While direct polling data is unavailable for the 1860s, these accomplishments strongly imply that Samuel

Who was the Most Popular Governor in Kansas History – Long version

By Jeff Chapman

Crawford was a well-regarded and popular figure in Kansas politics and society.

****Honorable Mention***

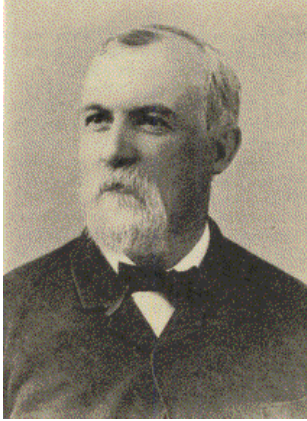


(Note: Harvey; greatest Gov' mustache of all time)

- **James Madison Harvey – 1869-1873** Governor James Harvey was widely considered popular and held in high public regard. He was known by the respectful nickname "Old Honesty" throughout his political career, from the state legislature to the U.S. Senate, a designation that was considered well-merited by his peers and the public. He won his two gubernatorial elections by significant margins. In 1868, he secured a majority of about 16,000 votes, and in 1870, his majority increased to about 20,000 votes. In the 1870 election, he won over 66% of the popular vote. His administration was characterized as a period of significant, genuine growth for Kansas. Accomplishments included major railroad construction (the Union Pacific was completed through the state), the creation of the State Board of Agriculture, the establishment of several new counties (including Harvey County, which was named in his honor), and the authorization of the state librarian position. He was described as a "plain man" who was not given to display, with his success stemming from his "worth as a citizen" and "republican simplicity". He was then elected to the United States Senate to fill a vacancy, where he served from 1874 to 1877. ****Honorable Mention***

Who was the Most Popular Governor in Kansas History – Long version

By Jeff Chapman



Governor Osborn

- **Thomas Andrew. Osborn 1873-1877**

Kansas Governor Thomas A. Osborn was a highly popular and respected statesman throughout his career in Kansas and in his later diplomatic roles. He won the gubernatorial elections in 1872 and 1874 with significant majorities, receiving over 65% and 56% of the popular vote, respectively. His forced removal as U.S. Marshal by President Andrew Johnson in 1867, due to differing views on Reconstruction, actually increased his standing and popularity within Kansas. Even after indicating he had no further desire for public office upon his return from Brazil, he was still elected to the State Senate for two terms. He was appointed by two different U.S. Presidents as Minister to Chile and Brazil, highlighting his continued political prominence and respect at both state and national levels. Historians describe him as "one of the most brilliant governors of Kansas, and his long career as an honored statesman is a source of State pride". Osborn's reputation for upright dealings and a straightforward course in performing his duties contributed to him being considered one of the most respected citizens of Kansas. ****Honorable Mention***

The modern era of Kansas Governors (since about 1900) has been more scrutinized, and has more public interaction and media attention which makes it more difficult to be popular or remain so. Here are 4 Governors that were well liked, well respected and sort of popular, but just not as popular overall as my chosen top ten in my opinion.

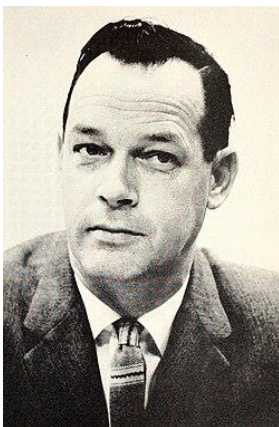
Who was the Most Popular Governor in Kansas History – Long version

By Jeff Chapman



Governor Docking

- **George Docking (1957-1961)** - Governor George Docking was a popular figure who won two terms in the largely Republican state, but his popularity waned by 1960, leading to his defeat for a third term, partly due to clashes with the legislature and a high-profile dispute with KU's Chancellor. He was known for being frugal and having a strong personality, but also for effective politicking that gained him votes despite his Democratic affiliation. He was elected in 1956 and reelected in 1958, the first Democrat to win two terms as Kansas Governor. He secured over 55% of the vote in both his successful elections. "Favorite Son" Candidate: He was popular enough to be considered a potential running mate for John F. Kennedy in 1960. He frequently clashed with the Republican-controlled legislature over taxes and spending. A prolonged, bitter feud with KU Chancellor Franklin Murphy led to Murphy's resignation, causing student backlash and negative publicity for Docking. He then lost his bid for a third term to Republican John Anderson, Jr., Docking was initially popular enough to break Democratic barriers in Kansas but faced significant political challenges that ultimately cost him a third term. Docking had been the Democratic nominee 4 times in a row for Governor losing the first and last, so his popularity with half of the state was good. ****Honorable Mention***

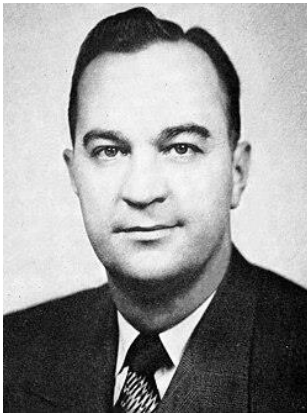


Governor Anderson

Who was the Most Popular Governor in Kansas History – Long version

By Jeff Chapman

- **John Anderson Jr. (1961-1965)** Governor Anderson was generally well-regarded, seen as a competent, "mild-mannered" but effective leader who won two terms and was known for his focus on getting things done, though he faced internal party challenges for his moderate stance, according to The Topeka Capital-Journal, Washburn University, and Kids encyclopedia facts. He was seen as a pragmatic, "forward-looking" governor who prioritized being a "Kansan first," even clashing with conservative party leaders for supporting moderate Nelson Rockefeller in 1964, notes The Wichita Eagle and Washburn University. He successfully won elections for Attorney General and then secured two terms as Governor in 1960 and 1962, a rare feat for a Kansas Republican at the time, according to Wikipedia and Kids encyclopedia facts. He had a "Get Things Done" reputation. Described as "tough-minded," and was credited with handling state issues effectively, even if he "lacked a flashy leadership style", says The Topeka Capital-Journal and The Wichita Eagle. People remember him as approachable and down-to-earth, making personal connections with Kansans, according to his obituary. His moderate Republicanism put him at odds with more conservative elements, leading to challenges, such as being denied a delegate spot at the 1964 GOP Convention for backing Rockefeller, notes Washburn University. He served as Chair of the National Governors Association. I also met him and he was a kind person. **Honorable Mention*



Governor Arn

- **Edward Ferdinand Arn (1951-1955)** was elected for two terms in the 1950s, winning both elections by comfortable margins. In the 1950 election, he defeated his opponent Kenneth T. Anderson with 53.77% of the popular vote. In the 1952 re-election, he increased his margin of victory significantly, securing 56.34% of the vote against Charles Rooney. He effectively dealt with the destructive floods of 1951. Established the Kansas Turnpike Authority and improved worker's compensation benefits, formed the Kansas Veteran's Commission and organized a state

Who was the Most Popular Governor in Kansas History – Long version

By Jeff Chapman

Department of Administration. I met him a few times. Nice guy. ****Honorable Mention***



Governor Carlin

- **John William Carlin** – Was the first to win a second 4-year term but was unsuccessful running for various offices afterwards. He was appointed to a federal post to run the National Archives. Kansas Governor John Carlin was popular during his time in office, enjoying significant electoral success that allowed him to make history. Carlin was elected to two consecutive four-year terms (1979–1987), becoming the first Kansas governor to be reelected to a second four-year term. This was especially notable in a predominantly Republican state, displaying a broad appeal. He served as the Speaker of the Kansas House from 1977 to 1979, the first Democrat in 64 years to hold the post and then won the governorship by defeating an incumbent Republican. A GOP internal poll from September 1981 showed a 55% approval rating for Governor Carlin. He was respected across party lines, a quality that some commentators note is missing in modern politics. He was later appointed Archivist of the United States by President Bill Clinton and introduced to the U.S. Senate by Republican Senator Bob Dole, indicating respect from both sides of the aisle at the national level as well. Carlin was an advocate for farmers and rural communities and worked to reach all areas of the state, which contributed to his broad support base. While his later attempt at a political comeback in the 1990 gubernatorial primary was unsuccessful, his time as governor is generally viewed as successful and popular. He is remembered as a dedicated public servant who was effective in a challenging political environment. He served as Chair of the National Governors Association. I also personally like the guy and he's a great K-Stater! He was ALMOST number 10. ****Honorable Mention***

Who was the Most Popular Governor in Kansas History – Long version

By Jeff Chapman

OK, OK, Let's get to it: Here are my "Top 10" in order of my unofficial rankings.



Governor/Senator Reed

- **Clyde Martin Reed (1929-1931):** After his governorship, he was elected to the U.S. Senate and served there for ten years, from 1939 to 1949. Clyde Reed's popularity as Governor of Kansas was mixed; he began with strong public support but quickly became a controversial figure and ultimately was defeated in his re-election bid for a second gubernatorial term. Reed was elected in 1928 with a commanding 65.60% of the vote, a clear sign of initial widespread support. He was known as a progressive candidate and served on the Kansas Industrial Court and Public Utilities Commission prior to his election, building a public profile. His governorship coincided with the onset of the Great Depression. He called a special legislative session to address the state's troubles, but his career during this time was described as "stormy". This period of turmoil led to his defeat in his bid for the Republican renomination in 1930. Despite his single term as governor, Reed remained a popular figure in Kansas politics, which suggests that his earlier defeat was likely more tied to the unfavorable economic climate than a permanent loss of public trust. In 1938, he was recruited by the political establishment as a popular choice to defeat an anti-Semitic preacher for the Republican Senate nomination. Reed won the general election for the U.S. Senate with 56.21% of the vote and was re-elected in 1944, serving until his death in 1949. After his loss as governor, he returned to editing the *Parsons Sun*, maintaining a public platform. In summary, while Reed was initially very popular and went on to have a successful career as a U.S. Senator leaving as a very popular figure. **Ranking *10**

Who was the Most Popular Governor in Kansas History – Long version

By Jeff Chapman



Governor Kelly

- **Laura Kelly (2019–Present):** Governor Kelly has consistently maintained a high approval rating, even as a Democrat in a strongly Republican state. As of 2024, she was ranked as one of the ten most popular governors in the country. In 2023, her approval rating averaged 58%, and she won re-election in 2022 with her own personal popularity contributing significantly to her success. In July 2025 polling from Morning Consult, 60% of Kansans approved of her job performance. In April 2024, she was ranked among the top ten most popular governors in the United States, with a 62% approval rating. Her predecessor, Sam Brownback, in contrast, had a 27% approval rating at the end of his term. If she sustains this popularity through the end of her term she will remain in my top 10. Governor Laura Kelly is generally popular in Kansas, because she focuses on bipartisan issues like school funding, infrastructure, and economic growth, appealing across party lines to a majority of Kansans who support common-sense solutions over divisive politics. Recent surveys indicate a higher favorability rating for her compared to national figures like Donald Trump, highlighting her strong standing. Kelly wins in a Republican-leaning state by focusing on core issues like education, roads, and economic development, which resonate with many voters, not just Democrats. Tracked by Washburn University, shows consistent approval, with her ratings often well above 50% and a positive spread. A 2025 survey showed Kansans widely support policies she champions, such as Medicaid expansion and marijuana legalization, further aligning her with public opinion. Her focus on economic development earned Kansas national recognition as a “Comeback State”, boosting her profile. Kelly prioritizes tangible outcomes, like fully funded schools and job creation, rather than partisan battles. She works across the aisle, building consensus and getting things done, making her seen as a pragmatic leader and she

Who was the Most Popular Governor in Kansas History – Long version

By Jeff Chapman

appeals to the "Kansan" Identity. She emphasizes shared Kansas values over strict party labels, building trust and support. In today's polarizing political environment, she has maintained popularity with most everyone except the ultra-conservatives. Kelly was endorsed publicly by former Governors Graves, Carlin, Hayden, Sebelius and Parkinson for both elections, which was unprecedented. And now her effort to get the Kansas City Chiefs based in Kansas will only help more. I knew her as a State Senator and she is a very fair and well-liked person. **Ranking*9**



Governor/Secretary Sebelius

- **Kathleen Sebelius (2003–2009):** Sebelius was a popular two-term Democratic governor who won re-election in 2006 by over 17 points. She was widely popular during her tenure before resigning to become the U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services. Kathleen Sebelius was immensely popular as Kansas Governor, achieving high approval ratings near 60% in a Republican state through bipartisan work, deficit reduction, and strong support for education and healthcare, earning her national recognition like Time's "Top Five Governors" in 2005 before she became HHS Secretary. She was known for bridging partisan divides, which made her a rising Democratic star and a strong contender for national roles, though her later federal role with the Affordable Care Act brought different challenges. She successfully worked across the aisle, a rare feat in Kansas politics including having several Republicans serve on her cabinet. *Time* magazine named her one of America's top five governors in 2005. Presidential Attention: Her success led to her being considered for Vice President and ultimately tapped by Barack Obama as HHS Secretary. She inherited a large deficit and successfully eliminated it. She strongly supported public education. She cracked down on HMOs, expanded prescription drug access, and pushed for children's healthcare. While highly popular as governor,

Who was the Most Popular Governor in Kansas History – Long version

By Jeff Chapman

her tenure as U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary, overseeing the Affordable Care Act (ACA), brought significant criticism and political challenges, contrasting with her earlier success in Kansas. She remains a very influential Kansas political figure particularly with moderate Democrats. I have known her personally for years and is always very professional. **Ranking*8**



Governor/Senator Allen

- **Henry Justin Allen – (1919-1923)** Governor Allen was initially immensely popular, winning his two gubernatorial elections by significant margins. However, his popularity became more complex later in his career, particularly due to his anti-strike policies and his controversial handling of the coal miners' strike. Allen won the 1918 Kansas gubernatorial election in a landslide with 66.39% of the vote. He was re-elected in 1920, securing 58.44% of the vote. He even learned of his initial victory while still in France, serving with the American Red Cross, without actively campaigning in the state at the time. His standing within the Republican party was strong enough that he was later appointed to the U.S. Senate by Governor Clyde Reed to fill a vacancy in 1929. While popular as governor, Allen was narrowly defeated in his subsequent election bid for a full term in the U.S. Senate in 1930. Overall, Henry Allen was a prominent and influential Kansas political leader for 50 years, and his initial success indicates a high degree of popularity, but his strong, sometimes polarizing, policies meant his public standing was not without opposition, including William Allen White who won a Pulitzer Prize for taking on Governor Allen. He served as Chair of the National Governors Association. Not only would I have a whiskey with this guy, I would also let him guard my car in the parking lot. **Ranking*7**

Who was the Most Popular Governor in Kansas History – Long version

By Jeff Chapman



Governor/Senator Schoeppel

- **Andrew Frank Schoeppel (1943-1947)** Governor Schoeppel re-entered politics in 1948 and was elected to the U.S. Senate, where he served until his death in 1962. Kansas Governor Andrew Schoeppel was considered popular during his time in office, a reputation supported by his significant re-election margins and his subsequent successful bids for the U.S. Senate. Ed Seaton, previous owner of the Manhattan Mercury, would probably call this double dipping in Schoeppel's political capital and avoiding the fade. He won his first gubernatorial election in 1942 with 56.68% of the popular vote and was re-elected in 1944 in a landslide victory, capturing an even larger 65.73% of the vote. A 1946 article in *TIME* magazine, referred to him as the "popular Governor Andrew F. Schoeppel" and noted by Kansas tradition he would not run for a third consecutive term. His popularity extended beyond his governorship, as he was elected to the U.S. Senate in 1948 and re-elected twice more in 1954 and 1960, winning each time by comfortable margins. Schoeppel's tenure as governor coincided with most of World War II which made most Kansans patriotic and supportive of his leadership. While generally popular, his approach to issues like capital punishment and prohibition drew some controversy, but this did not seem to significantly damage his overall public support.

Ranking*6

Who was the Most Popular Governor in Kansas History – Long version

By Jeff Chapman



Governor Landon

- **Alfred Mossman Landon (1929-1933)** – was a successful Republican governor during the Great Depression, the only one west of the Mississippi to win a gubernatorial contest in 1932. He reduced taxes and provided relief without increasing state debt. It's a quandary really. Ranking him is difficult, but I am going to include him. Landon won re-election in 1934, but his national popularity tanked in his 1936 presidential run against FDR, where he only carried Maine and Vermont, showing he resonated with Kansans but not the broader nation during the Great Depression. He was a successful oilman and politician in Kansas, known for fiscal conservatism and helping balance the state's budget, which made him a strong Republican choice, but the overwhelming support for FDR's New Deal overshadowed him nationally. He just couldn't translate his state appeal to national dominance. "Only Maine and Vermont": He famously won only two states, during the Depression-era New Deal. Landon was a respected figure in Kansas politics, but the national mood favored FDR's economic programs, making Landon a poor choice to challenge him in 1936. After politics and living to be over 100 years old, he was beloved as an elder statesman and remained popular until his death. His daughter Nancy Landon Kassebaum Baker, was successful in running for US Senate and served Kansas from 1979-1997, due partly to the initial popularity of the Landon name and reputation of her father. I met Mr. Landon when he was 100 years old. Cool dude. **Ranking*5**

Who was the Most Popular Governor in Kansas History – Long version

By Jeff Chapman



Governor Docking

- **Robert Blackwell Docking (1967–1975):** A Democrat, set a record by winning four two-year terms. His father, George Docking, was the first Democrat to be elected to a second term. The main building housing legislative offices for years was named after him and the newly reconstructed building in that same site will bear his name as well. To win an unprecedented 4 elections is difficult in any time period, which made him steadily well liked. Kansas Governor Robert Docking was exceedingly popular by appealing to conservative voters in a Republican state with his focus on limiting property taxes and controlling state spending though he had a "spotless record," according historians. Near the end of his tenure, indictments against his brother and an aide for bribery allegations cast a shadow, though the charges were eventually dropped. You can't say Kansas politics without the name Docking somewhere. He was the epitome of leading from the middle. **Ranking*4**



Governor/Senator Carlson

- **Frank Carlson (1947–1950):** Known for his "common touch" and ability to work across the aisle, Carlson won all 13 of his elections across various state and federal offices, serving 34 years in public office. He was instrumental in significant improvements to the state's highway and mental health systems and was highly

Who was the Most Popular Governor in Kansas History – Long version

By Jeff Chapman

respected by other Kansas statesmen. Frank Carlson was extremely popular, known for his down-to-earth style that connected him with Kansans, leading to an impressive 13 election wins in 13 tries, including his time as Governor (1947-1950) and later U.S. Senator, noted for his unpretentious manner and ability to relate to ordinary people. Carlson's tenure was a testament to enduring public trust.

"Unpretentious Manner": His close rapport with Kansans stemmed from his modest, relatable personality, says the Lawrence Journal-World. Even after his passing, figures like Senator Bob Dole praised him as one of Kansas's "finest statesmen," according to Kansas Government Information Online Library. He chose to retire to his farm, enjoying time as a private citizen. Carlson's popularity was built on his authenticity and accessibility, making him a beloved figure in Kansas politics. He served as Chair of the National Governors Association. He is the only Kansan to have held all four: state representative, U.S. representative, governor, and U.S. senate offices. **Ranking*3**

So here we are, down to the final two. One is the MOST POPULAR Governor as Governor of all time and even AI says so if you ask. The other is the MOST POPULAR Governor to have held the office with a lifetime of service to Kansas through elected office and beyond. Am I that weak that I am calling it a tie? I am. And these two barely squeaked by Frank Carlson.



Governor Graves

- **Bill Graves (1995–2003)**: a Republican, was highly popular and won his second four-year term with one of the largest margins in Kansas history. He maintained high approval ratings throughout his time in office, with polls in 1996 and 2001 showing his approval at 62% "excellent/good" and a final poll ranking him at 78% favorability, the highest of any Governor of record. He also won re-election with 73% of the vote which ranks him as the highest percentage vote getter of all

Who was the Most Popular Governor in Kansas History – Long version

By Jeff Chapman

time. It was also the largest percentage of any governor nationwide at the time. In 1998, with an overwhelming majority, receiving over 544,000 votes compared to his Democratic opponent's approximately 168,000. He also swept elections handily as a two-term Secretary of State prior to serving as Governor. After being Governor, he led the American Trucking Association to many successes and has remained a very influential voice in Kansas politics since as the spokesperson of the moderate Republicans. He was a centrist, moderate Republican who prioritized "bread-and-butter issues" like safe roads, balanced budgets, and quality schools. This approach resonated widely across the state, allowing him to transcend strict ideological lines. Graves earned a reputation for honesty, common sense, and sound leadership. He even appointed individuals from different parties to high positions in his administration. This respect continued long after he left office, as he notably endorsed the Democratic candidate for governor, Laura Kelly, in both the 2018 and 2022 elections, a move that was seen as significant and not taken lightly by observers. He served two full four-year terms from 1995 to 2003, making him the state's longest-serving Republican governor and one of the longest-serving overall. His administration was known for implementing the largest tax cut in state history and a major 10-year, \$13-billion transportation program. His ability to appeal to a wide range of Kansans solidified his reputation as a highly popular and effective governor. "Billy" is a personal friend of mine and it's difficult to not name him the single most popular Governor of all time. ***Ranking*Tied for 1***



Governor/Senator Capper

- **Arthur Capper (1915-1919):** The first native-born Kansan governor, he was a successful publisher and an advocate for children's welfare. He served two terms as governor and five terms as a U.S. Senator, demonstrating long-term popularity. He

Who was the Most Popular Governor in Kansas History – Long version

By Jeff Chapman

didn't win every election though. His only loss was his first bid for Governor and yet he only lost by 29 votes. He was also Kansas' longest serving Senator in history and his Capper Foundation has helped thousands of children for years and years. Making him my choice as the other most popular Kansas Governor in history. Kansas Governor Arthur Capper was immensely popular, winning reelection easily and later serving 30 years in the U.S. Senate, largely due to his advocacy for farmers, children (leading to the 4-H movement), and people with disabilities, supported by his massive newspaper empire and grassroots appeal. He won his 1916 gubernatorial reelection with over 60% of the vote and later defeated a sitting U.S. Senator by a landslide, achieving one of the biggest Senate victory margins in history. His Capper Publishing Company, including newspapers like *Capper's Weekly*, gave him a huge platform and direct connection with rural Kansans, as noted in his profile on the Kansas Sampler Foundation website. He was featured on the cover of *Time* magazine in 1926, highlighting his prominence. He is one of only four Kansans honored with a statue in the State Capitol rotunda, a testament to his impact. Key Policies & Actions: Agriculture & Youth: Championed agricultural clubs that evolved into the 4-H movement. Child Welfare: Established the Capper Foundation for Crippled Children (now Capper Foundation) after seeing children with disabilities unable to receive Christmas gifts, as detailed on the Capper Foundation website and themercury.com. He supported workingmen's compensation, minimum wage, and women's shorter hours. Kansas became a prohibition state under his governorship. It was "Bone Dry" as he said. He served as Chair of the National Governors Association. **Ranking*Tied for 1**

A common thread among many of the highly regarded governors in modern history is a centrist, policy-oriented approach, and a willingness to engage in bipartisan collaboration, which tends to appeal to a broad range of Kansas voters. Most were also named chair of the National Governors Association which made them popular among their peers.

I also found it interesting that many of the more popular governors are from the last 50 years. If you look at other states like Illinois where their more recent string of governors have been impeached or serving time, or places like Missouri or California where recall votes and negativity dominate the news cycle, we are quite fortunate to have stable, well-liked leaders in the Wheat State.

If you are considering a run for Governor in Kansas and want to be popular enough to have the political capital to accomplish many things and be remembered fondly, I would suggest governing from the middle. It works EVERY time or have an awesome mustache!

Who was the Most Popular Governor in Kansas History – Long version

By Jeff Chapman

What did my friend, former Governor Bill Graves have to say about this?

“Every Governor knows (but quite often is reluctant to admit) that their success’s aren’t always their’s to claim. But every Governor is quick to point out the cause of failures that they believe shouldn’t be attributable to them. I was very fortunate to govern during good economic times-making tax cuts a necessary priority. The emergence of the conservative wing of our party (and their immediate policy overreach) made the formation of a moderate R-Democrat working majority both necessary and relatively easy. Getting the executive branch of government to work-efficiently and effectively-is hard work. It’s the type of work that I felt suited for and enjoyed. Restructuring the governance of higher education, privatizing many of the social service functions, partnering with KCK on the Speedway project, spinning off KU Med from the University, none of those things very “sexy” from a political perspective-but look where they’ve brought us 30 years later. I’m flattered to be mentioned amongst so many great Kansas leaders. My greatest admiration is for the people of

Who was the Most Popular Governor in Kansas History – Long version

By Jeff Chapman

our state who gave me the opportunity to enjoy the best 8 years of my life. My obligation, for the trust they put in me, was to work to create a brighter future for all Kansans. Time still continues writing that story. ~BG”

Most Popular Kansas Governors of All Time

Honorable Mention: John Carlin, Samuel Crawford, James Harvey, Ed Arn, George Docking, Thomas Osborn, John Anderson, Jr.

- 10) Clyde Reed**
- 9) Laura Kelly**
- 8) Kathleen Sebelius**
- 7) Henry Allen**
- 6) Andrew Schoeppel**
- 5) Alf Landon**
- 4) Robert Docking**
- 3) Frank Carlson**
- 1) TIE- Bill Graves, Arthur Capper**

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https://themercury.com/features/most-popular-ks-governors-of-all-time/article_6ae85adc-7d90-48a1-9be7-693cf50f358b.html