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House member gives up seat to lead health agency

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TOPEKA - A House member from northeast Kansas will give up his seat to lead a new, nonprofit organization in Wichita.

Rep. Ed O'Malley, R-Overland Park, was elected in November to a second House term but said he could not pass up the opportunity to become president and chief executive officer of the Kansas Leadership Center.

Funded by the Kansas Health Foundation, the leadership center will open in January. Its aim is to convene statewide leaders to address health and wellness issues and train them to help their communities and organizations.

O'Malley, 31, said he intends to submit his resignation soon, hoping a replacement can be sworn in before the new legislative session begins Jan. 8.

After receiving an official resignation letter, the chairman of the Johnson County Republican Party has 21 days to call a convention of precinct committee leaders, who will choose the next representative.

Marni Vliet, president of the Kansas Health Foundation, said O'Malley would be charged with laying the groundwork for the fledging leadership center.

"He has such caring about the people of this state," Vliet said. "I believe it's his life work."