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WE CAN'T SIT THIS ONE OUT

The AI Conversation Starts Now

By **Bonita Gooch**
Editor, In Chief

We've all seen the movies, where computers take over the world. Artificial intelligence is no longer something we can afford to ignore. It's not coming someday. It's already here — and it's moving faster than most of us can keep up with.

For many people, AI feels simple. It's ChatGPT helping write an email, summarize information, or answer a question. And yes — those tools are useful. They're even impressive.

But AI is much bigger than that.

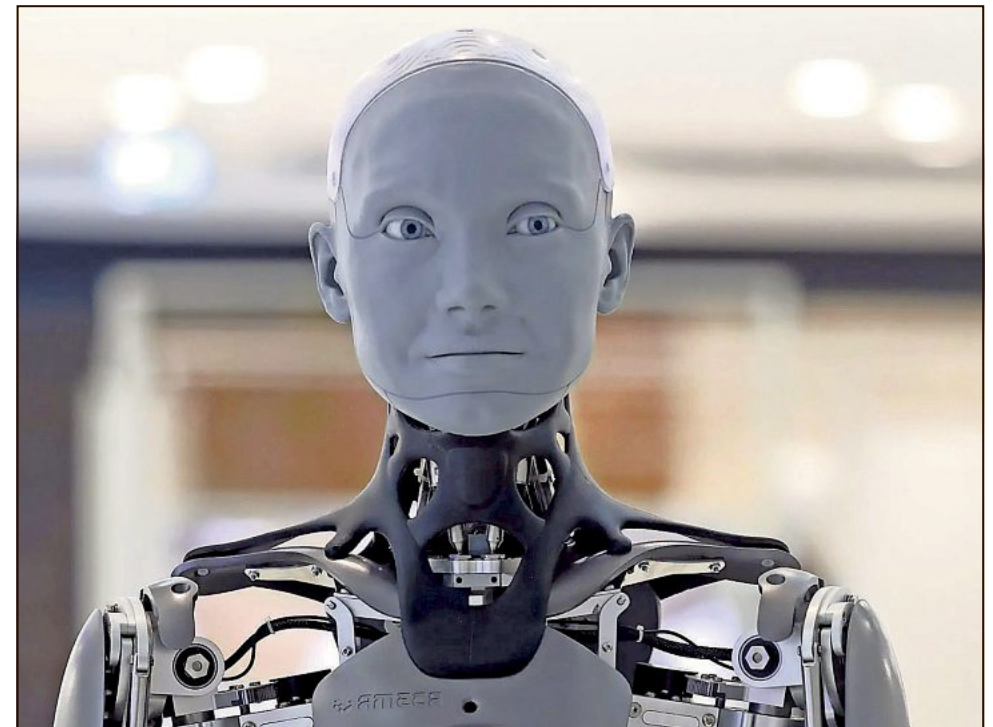
What we're seeing today is just the beginning. These systems are learning on their own, recognizing patterns across massive amounts of data, and improving at a pace that even the people creating them don't fully understand.

That should give us pause. I was reminded of just how serious this is after watching "The AI Doc: Or How I Became an Apocaloptimist." and my local movie theater. It was powerful. It was unsettling. And more than anything, it was a wake-up call.

The message at the end wasn't complicated. It didn't call for panic. It called for awareness. It called for conversation. It called for action.

Talk about this. Tell others. That stuck with me.

Because if we're honest, this issue hasn't truly captured our attention yet. When I went to see the film, there



were only two other people in the theater. That says something.

We are still treating this like it's optional to understand. Like it's something we can get to later.

We can't.

We've already watched computers go from rare household machines to something we carry in our pockets every day. We've seen them move from simple tools to systems that can write, create, analyze, and even outperform humans in some areas — and that shift happened quickly.

Now imagine what comes next.

AI has the potential to improve healthcare, education,

and everyday life. But it also has the power to deepen inequality, spread misinformation, eliminate jobs, and concentrate control in ways we may not fully understand until it's too late.

And right now, the focus is on speed — who can build the biggest, fastest, most powerful system.

But we should be asking something different: Who is this being built for?

Because if we don't ask that question now, we may not like the answer later.

We can't put AI back in a box. That moment has passed.

But we are not powerless. If you can, go see the film.

It won't be in theaters long.

If you can't, read about it. Watch discussions online. Oprah has a powerful podcast conversation about AI that's worth your time.

But don't stop there.

Talk about this with your family, your friends, your coworkers. And more importantly, talk to people in power. Demand that this technology be developed responsibly, with safeguards, transparency, and the public's best interest at heart.

That's where our power lies.

Because AI will shape the future — that much is certain.

The only question is whether we will help shape it... or wait until it's too late.

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Black Voters Matter: Say This Moment Require More Than The Ballot

Even though their organization is named Black Voters Matter, co-founders LaTosha Brown and Cliff Albright say their work goes far beyond elections.

By Bonita Gooch
Voice Editor-in Chief

“Our work is not really centered around elections,” Brown said. “Our work is how we gonna build independent Black political power.”

For the two longtime organizers — who have spent nearly three decades doing racial justice work since meeting in Selma, Alabama — that focus on power has become even more urgent.

They point to what they describe as a coordinated rollback affecting multiple areas of Black life.

Across the country, changes are unfolding in education, employment, public policy and civic participation — from the rollback of diversity initiatives and limits on how Black history is taught to the dismantling of policies that once helped address

discrimination.

What’s happening, they say, isn’t isolated.

It’s connected.

Voter Suppression

Even as their work extends beyond voting, Brown and Albright say the current moment demands close attention to what’s happening with voting rights.

Because while power is broader than elections, voting remains one of the most immediate tools communities have — and one that is increasingly under pressure.

Among the biggest concerns is the proposed SAVE Act, a federal elections bill that would significantly change how Americans register to vote.

If enacted, the legislation would require proof of U.S. citizenship — such as a passport or birth certificate — to

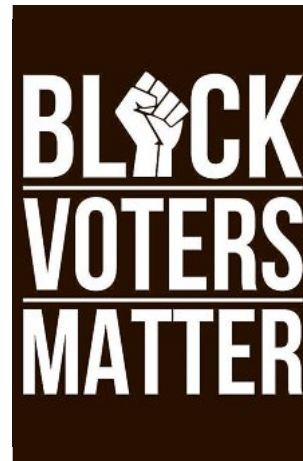
register. It would also eliminate widely used registration methods, including online registration, mail-in registration and community-based voter registration drives.

Supporters say the bill is designed to strengthen election integrity and ensure only eligible voters participate.

But voting rights advocates warn the changes could create new barriers, particularly for people who rely on community outreach, lack easy access to official documents or face logistical challenges in registering in person.

For organizers, the concern is not just about one piece of legislation — but about a broader trend toward restrictive access.

“This is outright war against our communities,” Albright said during an April 1 briefing with Black media.



Voting Is A Tool

Black Voters Matter leaders are clear: voting still matters.

But it is not the only answer.

“We don’t believe that voting... is going to lead to Black liberation by itself,” Brown said.

Instead, they describe voting as one tool — part of a

larger “power toolbox.”

A way to reduce harm, influence outcomes and create space for broader organizing.

A 365-Day Approach To Power

Their Black empowerment work extends beyond elections.

“This is work we do 365 days out of the year,” Brown said.

Black Voters Matter was built on the idea that power must be developed continuously — not just during campaign seasons.

That includes investing in local organizations, building leadership in communities often overlooked, and connecting everyday concerns — from housing to education — to political action.

Their approach is rooted in long-term organizing, not short-term turnout.

From Awareness To Action

Leaders say what’s happening now requires more than awareness.

It requires engagement — and it has to start long before Election Day.

During the April 1 briefing, public opinion researcher Terrance Woodbury shared data showing that people who participate in resistance activities — including protests, boycotts, petitions and town halls — are more likely to vote later.

But just as important, he said, is when that engagement happens.

Rather than only reaching out in the final weeks before an election, engaging people year-round builds a stronger sense of ownership and participation — making them

See **Black Voters Matter** Page 4 →

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Black Voters Matter,
from Page 3 ↓

more likely to show up when it matters most.

“The more likely they are to take any of these resistance actions now, the more likely they are to vote later,” Woodbury said.

For Brown and Albright, that approach is central to their strategy.

“We got to fight,” Brown said.

That fight can take many forms:

- Community organizing
- Attending local meetings and town halls
- Participating in protests and civic actions
- Supporting grassroots organizations
- Holding elected officials accountable

“We got to be willing to use the power that we have,” Albright said.

Building Something Bigger

But beyond reacting to what’s happening, organizers say communities must

also think about what they want to build.

“What would this nation look like without racism?” Brown asked.

She said that kind of vision is critical — because systems don’t change without first imagining something different.

“If we can’t even envision it, we’ll never create it,” she said, emphasizing the need to rethink systems and build toward something new.

What Comes Next

As the 2026 elections approach, organizers say the moment calls for urgency — but also clarity.

This is not just about voting rights.

It’s about power — who has it, how it’s used, and whether Black communities are actively shaping the decisions that affect their lives.

For Brown, that comes down to agency — and recognizing that power must be claimed, not granted.

Organizers say that mindset shift is essential in this moment.

“Power is not something that appears every election cycle. It is something that must be built — consistently, collectively and over time. We ain’t going nowhere till our people are free.”

LATOSHA BROWN



Could Voter Registration Drives Disappear Nationwide?

Trump’s SAVE America Act would end voter registration drives nationwide

What to Know

- Trump-backed bill could eliminate voter registration drives nationwide
- Would eliminate mail-in and online voter registration options
- Requires proof of citizenship to register in person
- Supporters cite security; critics warn of reduced voter access

By Voice News Service

A federal elections proposal backed by former President

Donald Trump would significantly change how Americans register to vote — and how that process works nationwide.

The legislation, known as the SAVE America Act, is one of Trump’s top legislative priorities and is already moving through Congress.

At its core, the bill would require voters to prove their U.S. citizenship before they can register. That proof — such as a passport or birth certificate — would have to be presented to election officials, shifting registration toward a more document-based process.

The proposal also directly targets how registration happens.

It would eliminate voter registration drives, long used by schools, churches, nonprofits and community groups to sign people up at events and in neighborhoods. Those efforts, while a small share of total registrations, still helped more than 2 million Americans get registered during the 2024 election cycle.

The bill would also end two of the most commonly used registration methods: registering online and registering by mail. Instead, the process would rely on in-person verification tied to proof-of-citizenship requirements.

Together, those changes would mark a major shift away



Forms like these are a staple of voter registration drives at schools and community events — efforts that could disappear under a proposed federal measure.

from convenience-based systems toward stricter, in-person registration.

Supporters of the legislation,

including Trump and Republican lawmakers, say the changes are necessary to strengthen election security

and ensure that only U.S. citizens are voting.

They argue that requiring documentation creates a clear and consistent standard across all states and prevents potential noncitizen voting, even if such cases are rare.

Republican backers have also emphasized that the bill allows states flexibility in how they implement the requirements, including what documents can be used to verify citizenship.

“This would preserve the integrity of every vote cast in a federal election,” Sen. Chuck Grassley, an Iowa Republican,

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DOJ Joins Missouri Lawsuit Challenging High School Sports Diversity Rule

Federal officials argue long-standing board policy unlawfully excludes candidates based on race and gender

The U.S. Justice Department's Civil Rights Division is getting involved in Missouri Attorney General Catherine Hanaway's lawsuit against a nonprofit governing body for high school sports and activities, accusing the organization of sex and race discrimination for denying a board position to a White man.

U.S. attorneys cite key civil rights cases, like *Loving v. Virginia* in 1967 striking down laws banning interracial marriage, in a motion to intervene filed last week that argues the Missouri State High School Activities Association's policy constitutes "systematic unconstitutional race and sex-based discrimination."

The lawsuit focuses on a 2004 MSHSAA policy that reserves two at-large spots on its 10-member board of directors for "candidates representing the under-represented gender of the current board or an under-represented ethnicity."

MSHSAA and its members created this policy in 2004 after noticing a "striking pattern" that the board, with one exception, had never had "a minority or female board member," the organization's attorney, Natalie Hoernschemeyer, wrote in a letter to the state auditor.

The rule quietly governed the board's composition for over two decades until March 2025, when Cassville Superintendent Merlyn Johnson was denied the opportunity to run for an at-large spot.

Johnson reported the alleged discrimination to State Auditor Scott Fitzpatrick, who investigated the complaint through a series of letters to MSHSAA's attorney before reporting the incident to the attorney general's office in November.



Two teams meet at midfield before kickoff — a familiar scene across Missouri high school sports now tied to a growing legal battle over who gets a seat at the table governing those games.

Throughout this process, the organization has defended the policy. When state lawmakers debated a bill to create state oversight of MSHSAA, its executive director, Jennifer Rukstad, was firm with committee members who sought to label the rule as unfair.

"It has served our members and our organization very well," she said, later adding, "It is our contention that it is not a discriminatory policy."

But U.S. attorneys see the rule as a violation of the Equal

Protection Clause. And before being ousted on Thursday as U.S. Attorney General, Pam Bondi labeled the case "of general public importance."

"Racial and sexual quotas are offensive, demeaning — and most importantly, illegal," Assistant Attorney General Harmet K. Dhillon of the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division said in a news release. "They are especially harmful when they exclude qualified candidates such as Dr. Johnson from public service."

Policies like MSHSAA's that attempt to give opportunities to underrepresented groups have come under fire in recent years with a federal crusade against diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives. Some of these battles have already made it through the courts, like the U.S. Supreme Court's decision striking down affirmative action in 2023.

Whether or not this precedent applies to the case against MSHSAA will depend in large part on whether the organization serves a public function.

At its core, the organization is a private nonprofit, which would ordinarily not be subject to claims under the Fourteenth Amendment. But court filings show state and federal attorneys attempt to characterize MSHSAA as public, pointing out that the organization's members are predominantly public schools and that MSHSAA's employees are eligible for the state retirement system.

The organization has yet to respond to the complaint in court. A spokesperson for MSHSAA told *The Independent* in a statement that the association "respectfully disagrees with the allegations contained in the filings."

What's Happening To Missouri's Gas Station Slot Machines?

A Crackdown Is Finally Here

By The Voice News Service

Missouri's long-running battle over so-called "gray market" slot machines may finally be reaching a breaking point — not because lawmakers have agreed on a solution, but because prosecutors are forcing the issue.

After years of operating in legal gray space, Torch Electronics — the largest provider of the machines — is shutting them down across Missouri, at least for now. The company told retailers it would switch off its games as state and federal authorities move forward with a joint criminal investigation.

The move marks the most significant disruption yet in an industry that has quietly grown into a major, largely unregulated source of profit for machine operators



Slot-style machines like these, commonly found in Missouri convenience stores, have operated for years outside state gambling laws — generating profits for private companies and retailers while drawing increasing scrutiny from prosecutors and lawmakers.

and the convenience stores and bars that host them.

And it signals something that hasn't happened in years: real enforcement.

For nearly a decade, these slot-style machines have spread across Missouri, operating outside the state's gambling laws. Players insert money, play games that look like casino slots, and collect winnings at the counter — but unlike casinos, the machines aren't regulated and don't generate direct revenue for the state.

Efforts to crack down have repeatedly stalled.

The Missouri State Highway Patrol referred roughly 200 cases to prosecutors in 2019 and 2020, but few charges followed, and most targeted store owners with minor violations rather than the companies behind the machines.

Torch itself largely avoided prosecution, aggressively fighting in court and arguing its machines were legal because players could preview outcomes, removing the element of chance.

That argument helped keep the industry alive — and profitable.

One convenience store operator testified

recently that her company made more than \$1.5 million from the machines in 2025 alone. Estimates suggest there could be tens of thousands of these machines across Missouri.

At the same time, gambling interests — including companies tied to the machines — have poured millions into political campaigns, raising long-standing concerns about whether enforcement was being slowed by influence.

There are signs that dynamic is shifting.

Under new leadership, Missouri Attorney General Catherine Hanaway has taken a more aggressive approach, partnering with federal prosecutors and filing felony gambling charges and civil cases against operators and retailers.

A recent federal court ruling also undercut the industry's legal defense, with a judge declaring Torch's machines meet the definition of illegal gambling devices when

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After Veto, Property Tax Relief Effort Hits A Wall In Kansas Legislature

Governor rejects a slate of bills on voting, housing, immigration and education

By Bonita Gooch
Voice Editor-in-Chief

The bill, Senate Substitute for House Bill 2745, aimed to limit local government spending and give residents the power to block increases. Local budgets could grow by no more than 3% or the rate of inflation, whichever was lower. If they exceeded that, 10% of registered voters could sign a protest petition to stop the increase. If successful, the budget would be forced back to the previous year's level — even if costs had risen. Supporters said this would give taxpayers more control over rising property taxes. But critics warned it could create instability, since a relatively small number of voters could overturn budgets already in place. Local officials said that uncertainty could make it harder to fund infrastructure, public safety and growth — and could even affect the ability to borrow money for projects.

Why the Veto Likely Ends the Plan

The bill passed narrowly — 63-59 in the House and 22-18 in the Senate — well short of the two-thirds majority required to override a governor's veto. That means lawmakers would need significant additional support to revive it, making its path forward unlikely.

Second Plan Falls Short in the House

Recognizing those limits, Republican lawmakers shifted to a different strategy: putting the issue directly before voters. Senate Concurrent Resolution 1603 would have amended the Kansas Constitution to allow lawmakers to limit how much property values can increase — a key driver of rising tax bills. If approved by the Legislature and voters, it would have given lawmakers broad authority to cap valuation increases starting in 2028. But the proposal failed Thursday in the House, 69-54, also falling short of the two-thirds majority required to place a constitutional amendment on the ballot. Opponents argued that valuation caps could create long-term inequities in the tax system, while supporters said they were necessary to slow rising property taxes.

What Kelly's Plan Would Do

Her proposal focuses on direct relief and incentives: A one-time \$250 vehicle tax credit for all vehicle owners, paid from the state's rainy

day fund. A \$60 million annual fund (growing by 2% each year) to reward cities and counties that keep budget growth at about 3% or less. Doubling the homeowner exemption on the state's school property tax from \$75,000 to \$150,000, with the state covering the cost to maintain school funding. The homeowner exemption would reduce the taxable value of homes, lowering tax bills, while the state replaces the lost revenue using the State General Fund.

A Stalled Path Forward

For now, both sides remain far apart. Republicans continue to push for structural limits on taxes and spending, while the governor is emphasizing state-funded relief and local flexibility. With neither side showing signs of backing down — and little time left in the session — meaningful property tax reform this year is increasingly uncertain.

Kelly's veto of the property tax plan was part of a broader wave of decisions, as she also rejected several other high-profile bills passed during the session.



Gov. Laura Kelly poses for a photo with attendees at Kansas Black Legislative Day earlier this session. As the session drew to a close, Kelly used her veto power to block several Republican-backed measures, including proposals on property taxes, tenant rights, voting and immigration.

Voting Bills — New Limits on Mail Voting, IDs and Registration

House Bill 2569 would centralize election-related lawsuits in Shawnee County and create a trigger that could significantly limit mail voting. If courts block or weaken signature verification requirements for mail ballots, Kansas would end no-excuse mail voting

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How DuBois Built A 20-Year Presence In Wichita's Engineering Market

The city's longest-standing minority-owned engineering firms reflects on two decades of growth

By Bonita Gooch,
Editor In Chief

DuBois Consultants Inc., the only minority-owned engineering design firm in Wichita, will celebrate 20 years in the city this month.

The Kansas City, Missouri-based civil and structural engineering firm will host an anniversary happy hour April 16, bringing together clients, partners and community leaders to recognize two decades of work in Wichita.

How DuBois Got Its Start In Wichita

The firm opened its Wichita office in 2006 after being encouraged by a Kansas City partner, CDM, a national engineering firm DuBois frequently worked with. CDM, which had a strong presence in Wichita, was looking to partner with a minority firm on local projects and invited DuBois to consider expanding into the market.

That introduction gave DuBois a starting point — but turning that opportunity into sustained work would take more than a single partnership.

DuBois built its presence by delivering quality work,



Jennifer Brehon, DuBois's Wichita Business Development Consultant and new owner Cervente Sudduth.

meeting deadlines and proving itself as a reliable project partner.

But getting additional opportunities required something more.

Founder Ajamu Webster said early success depended less on policy and more on understanding how business was done locally — where trust often had to

be established before work followed.

That led to one of his first and most important decisions: hiring Jennifer Brehon — his first Wichita employee — who, 20 years later, remains the firm's anchor in the city.

With deep roots in the community and connections that stretched across City Hall,

Engineering Firm Opens Wichita Office

DuBois Consultants, a 20-year-old civil and structural engineering firm based in Kansas City, MO, has opened a Wichita office making them the only African-American engineering firm in the city. Besides the ability to establish the firm as a first, president Ajamu K. Webster, P.E. says he was attracted to Wichita because of its proximity to Kansas City, its high level of development activity and the City of Wichita's recently adopted Emerging Business Program.

"They extended themselves to attract our firm," says Webster, about the City of Wichita.

DuBois, named after Black leader W.E.B. DuBois, has already secured two city engineering jobs: a sanitary storm sewer and work on the design phase of the new Mid-Century Sewer Treatment Plant. They are also working on a local aquifer recharging project with CDM, a majority-owned Wichita engineering firm.

The firm is currently interviewing for other City of Wichita jobs and thanks to a request for



"We submit a price, but price is not the main consideration (for choosing engineering firms)," says Webster. "The decisions are qualifications based."

With an extensive background in public civil engineering projects in Kansas City, Omaha and St. Louis, the DuBois team is qualified. In Kansas City, they have a team of 25 engineers. All of them are African Americans except one. They've worked on campus

and 20% private. "We'd like to change that," says Webster who says the firm would like to do more work on housing developments. Locally, the firm employs one engineer, Aury Arzaman and Jennifer Brehon, a Business Development Specialist. "We want to get engaged in the community," says Webster. "We want to be a part of Wichita in that capacity." In Kansas City

Article announcing DuBois entry into the Wichita market that ran in The Community Voice in 2006.

engineering firms and local leadership, Brehon helped introduce DuBois to the right people and position the company for early opportunities.

Over time, those introductions turned into contracts — and then into repeat work and sustained relationships.

Her impact has been widely recognized. Brehon has received the *Wichita Business Journal's* Diversity and Inclusion Award two consecutive years for her advocacy and efforts to expand opportunities for minority-owned businesses.

She was appointed by former Mayor Brandon Whipple to the City of Wichita's Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Board and now

serves on a committee helping guide the city's transition to a race-neutral program expected to focus more on business size.

Building a Wichita Project Portfolio

DuBois' work extends beyond the city's water and wastewater operations to projects for Sedgwick County, USD 259 and private development.

DuBois has worked on the Jabara Airport taxiway expansion, the design and construction of the Sedgwick County Emergency Medical Services Central facility, and improvements at the Cowtown Museum, including its new welcome and

administrative center.

The firm also partnered with McAfee3 Architecture on USD 259 projects approved under a recent bond program, contributing to the design and construction of Jackson and Buckner elementary schools.

Its housing-related work includes both private development and major public housing efforts. DuBois participated in the City of Wichita's public housing redevelopment program, providing site analysis and construction cost estimates for the renovation of several Wichita Housing Authority senior housing facilities, including Greenway Manor, McLean Manor, Rosa Gragg Senior Units and Bernice Hutchinson Senior Units.

The firm has also contributed to major water infrastructure projects, including work at the Northwest Water Treatment Facility and wastewater treatment plant improvements, such as Biological Nutrient Removal projects designed to reduce nitrogen and phosphorus levels in the Arkansas River by more than 79% and 80%, respectively.

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A Decade Of Care: Books & Breakfast Builds Readers And Community

More Than Breakfast:
How A Wichita Program
Is Building Young Readers

By Ty Davis and Bonita Gooch
The Community Voice

For nearly a decade, Books & Breakfast has served as a trusted neighborhood space where food, literacy, and community care come together.

What may appear to be a simple Saturday morning gathering is, in reality, the product of years of grassroots organizing, volunteer commitment, and a shared belief that communities must often build for themselves.

Children arrive early — often with parents — and are welcomed with a hot breakfast in a space that feels more like family than formality. The menu changes monthly, depending on donations, but the goal remains the same: start the day with a meal.

After breakfast comes storytime.

At a recent event, longtime volunteer and program organizer TaDonna Neal read “*Ruby Finds a Worry*,” turning the story into an interactive experience by asking questions and inviting responses.

“What do you think she’s worried about?” she asked.

Hands went up. Answers came — family, fears, feelings.

The story became a conversation, helping children connect emotions to words. By the end, the message was clear — and repeated by the children themselves: talk about it.

That interaction — children thinking, speaking, engaging — is at the heart of Books & Breakfast, and why parents keep coming.

One mother, who has attended for about a year, said the program has helped change how her children see reading.

“I have a couple of kids that don’t like to read,” she said. “Actually, by coming here... they’re starting to enjoy it more.”

She said the experience goes beyond books.

“Letting the kids be able to have a choice of books and just socialize and learn,” she said.

At the end of every event, each child selects a book to take home — something they can read again and again, building confidence and familiarity along the way.

That simple step extends the impact beyond Saturday morning.

It helps build comfort with reading — turning it into something children recognize, enjoy, and return to.

Built Over Time, Sustained by Commitment

The program didn’t just come together — it was built, step by step, by people committed to meeting real



Antar Gholar has played a key role in sustaining Books & Breakfast and its decade-long commitment to community and literacy.

needs in their community.

Among them is Antar Gholar, whose role has been vital to the growth and consistency of the program, even though he has often preferred to work behind the scenes.

In an interview, Gholar traced part of the story back to his own grassroots outreach on the North Side.

What began as Pants & Pancakes started with hot breakfast, donated clothing, folding tables, and a desire to meet immediate neighborhood needs.

“We just went outside and did it,” Gholar said, describing the early days of serving families in front of his home and later in neighborhood parks.

That grassroots spirit eventually merged with a broader organizing vision.

According to organizer Durell Gilmore, part of the framework began taking shape during the summer of 2017 into 2018 through his work with the Poor People’s Campaign.

During that time, local organizers were discussing how national movements often fail to meet urgent neighborhood needs.

That conversation helped shape a local response rooted in direct service and empowerment.

Drawing inspiration from



TaDonna Neal

historic community breakfast programs, Books & Breakfast was built around the idea that immediate needs and long-term growth can be addressed together.

A meal meets hunger.

A book opens the imagination.

A trusted space builds community.

Longtime volunteers such as Neal, who has served for nearly seven to eight years, have been instrumental in maintaining the consistency that families now rely on.

CORE members, community elders, sponsors, churches, local authors, and neighborhood supporters have all helped sustain the work — many contributing their time, energy, and resources with little outside funding.

That collective commitment is what has allowed the program to continue — month after month, year after year.

Why It Matters — And What’s Needed Next

After nearly a decade, Books & Breakfast is not only a breakfast program.

It is a people-powered model of

trust, literacy, and neighborhood restoration on Wichita’s North Side.

For families, the impact shows up in small but meaningful ways.

The mother who attends regularly said she encourages others to come, but understands the challenge of getting children up and out on a Saturday morning.

Still, she believes more families would benefit, and become regulars, if they gave it a try.

Children who first attended years ago are now returning as teenagers and young adults.

Some bring younger siblings.

Others return simply because the space has become part of their story.

That continuity may be the clearest sign of impact.

The next Books & Breakfast gathering will take place Saturday, April 11, from 10:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. at Build & Rebuild.

Families are encouraged to come as they are.

Breakfast will be ready.

A story will be waiting.

And every child will leave with a book — and a reason to come back.



Children at Books & Breakfast select books to take home, helping build familiarity with reading and encouraging them to return to it on their own.

More Candidates, More Turnover — Jackson County Races Take Shape

More than half of Legislature seats will turn over as crowded primaries take center stage

By Bonita Gooch
Editor In Chief

With the March 31 filing deadline now closed, the field is set for Jackson County's 2026 elections — and it's more crowded than when candidates first began filing in February.

Voters will need to pay attention early. With multiple contested primaries, many key races could effectively be decided on **Aug. 4**, ahead of the **Nov. 3** general election.

County Executive Race Grows To Eight Candidates

When The Community Voice first reported on the race in March, just three Democrats had filed. That field has now grown to **eight candidates**, including one Republican, ensuring both a competitive primary and a general election.

Here's who is running:

- **DaRon McGee**, current Jackson County legislator representing the 4th District in southeastern Kansas City



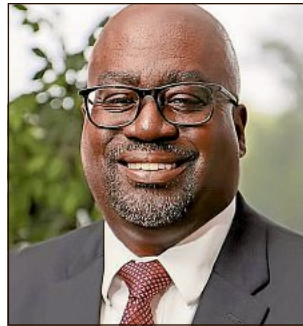
Brandon Ellington

and Raytown. He was one of five votes to appoint Phil LeVota as interim executive in October 2025.

- **Stacy Lake**, an attorney who nearly unseated Frank White Jr. in the 2022 Democratic primary, earning 47% of the vote.

- **Ryan Meyer**, a marketing consultant and Streetcar Transportation Development District board member who previously ran for county legislator in 2022.

- **Holmes Osborne**, a financial analyst who serves on the Metropolitan Community College Board of Trustees.



Erick Dickinson

- **Bill Baird**, the current mayor of Lee's Summit, commercial real estate broker and former school board member. Baird has pushed back on the idea that the race lacked qualified candidates before LeVota entered.

- **Erik Steffen**, a major-account manager at a cybersecurity company.

- **Alan Rohlring**, a former U.S. military service member from Lee's Summit and the only Republican in the race.

They are joined by **Interim County Executive Phil LeVota**, whose decision to run drew attention after he signed an affidavit indicating



Venessa Huskey

he would not seek the office.

New Legislative Challengers Since March

Since our initial report, two key races have drawn new challengers:

- **In 2nd District At-Large**, incumbent **Donna Peyton** now faces **Brandon Ellington**, a former Missouri state representative and former Kansas City council member. The winner of that Democratic primary will face Republican **Gresia Cabrera** in the general election.

- **In 2nd District**, first-term legislator **Venessa Huskey** now faces a primary challenge



Donna Peyton

from **Erick Dickinson**, a first-time candidate with a background in youth development. Dickinson is president of Urban Ranger Corps, which focuses on preparing at-risk youth for careers, leadership and community involvement. This race will likely be decided in the primary, as no Republican has filed for the seat.

Major Turnover Expected On Legislature

There will be significant turnover on the nine-member Jackson County Legislature, with five members not seeking reelection:

- **DaRon McGee**, who is running for county executive
- **Megan Smith**, 3rd District At-Large, who is not seeking reelection after just one term

- **Sean Smith**, who currently represents the 6th District and has completed one term. He initially entered the Republican primary for the newly drawn 4th Congressional District but withdrew and is now running for the Missouri House, District 34

- **Charlie Franklin**, 3rd District, term-limited

- **Jeanie Lauer**, 5th District, term-limited

Other Races Previously Covered

- **1st District At-Large:** Incumbent **Jalen Anderson** faces Democratic challengers Carla Fields and Justice Horn, with a Republican also filed for the general election.

- **3rd District At-Large:** **Susan Wilson**, a former

See CANDIDATES Page ?? →

Few Surprises In Missouri General Assembly Races After Filing Deadline

With the filing deadline now passed, there's little change in the Missouri General Assembly races from what we reported in early March — and not much drama either.

Most incumbents are running unopposed through the primary and, in many cases, the general election.

One update: **Rep. Anthony Ealy**, who had not yet filed at the time of our earlier report, has now



Michael Johnson

entered the race for reelection in the 36th District.



Mark Sharp

He is unopposed in the Democratic primary but will

face a Republican challenger in November.

The biggest developments are not in who is running — but who is not.

Rep. Michael Johnson (23rd District) and **Rep. Mark Sharp** (37th District) have both opted not to seek what would have been their final eligible two-year terms in the legislature. Instead, both are turning their attention to Kansas City municipal politics.

Johnson is expected to run for the **3rd District Kansas City Council seat**, which is being vacated by term-limited Councilmember Melissa Robinson. Sharp plans to run for the **5th District seat**, currently held by term-lim-

ited Councilmember Ryana Parks-Shaw.

The state office elections have primaries in August and general elections in November. The Kansas City, MO municipal elections are **April 7, 2026**, Kansas City.

SCAN THE QR CODE
To read about the candidates
in the races.



KC G.I.F.T. Pitch Competition Awards \$60K To Local Entrepreneurs

Someday Sunday wins top prize as founders compete for funding and growth

By Starland News

Winning a \$30,000 grand prize over the weekend closed out a six-week process for LaToya Ebony Sirls and other founders who were pushed to refine not just how they present, but how they build.

Sirls' Someday Sunday brand offers plant-based, vegan bath and body products — including body creams, lip butters and shower steamers — designed to nourish skin while building daily self-care routines. Many of the products combine skincare benefits with aromatherapy, helping address concerns like dryness and dullness while creating a calming, spa-like experience at home.

The business finished with the top award Saturday during **Kansas City G.I.F.T.'s Vision of Equity Business Summit and Pitch Competition** at the Delta Athenaeum.

"I was hoping for it, but you just never know," Sirls said of the victory. "Honestly, I felt good about what I pitched."

That confidence carried through a pitch focused on scaling production and tightening operations behind the scenes. A significant portion of the funding is already mapped out, aimed at hiring a production specialist to help with in-house formulation.

Sirls is actively working to connect with local talent in chemistry and formulation through Kansas City's Career Development Center, while also putting more intention behind marketing to grow the brand's reach.



(L-R) first-place winner LaToya Ebony Sirls, Someday Sunday; second-place winner, La'Nesha Fraizer, Bliss Books & Wine; and third-place winner Tiffany Simmons, SknClusive Beauty Spa & Education Center pose together after winning at Kansas City G.I.F.T.'s Vision of Equity Business Summit and Pitch Competition. PHOTO BY NIKKI OVERFELT CHIFALU, STARLAND NEWS

"I'd love to get someone who has a love for chemistry and formulation, and then we're going to work on paid marketing so that our organic content and everything can go much further," she said.

Sirls recently introduced such products as shower steamers and other bath items, with more in that category on the way as she builds toward increased demand tied to the World Cup.

At the same time, operations are expanding into a new production space at Elevator in North Kansas City. Sirls also has plans to bring on interns this summer as the business continues to grow and soak up new opportunities.

"I'm really excited about it

all," she said.

Behind the Scenes: Annual Pitch Competition

The annual pitch competition, organized by Kansas City G.I.F.T., brought nine founders to the stage following a six-week training program that included pitch coaching, mock judging and business development support.

The preparation period remains central to the experience, said G.I.F.T. co-founder Brandon Calloway.

"Every year, the thing that excites me the most, honestly, is the thing that we don't get to show," he said. "We put them through six weeks worth of pitch prep, and then we do mock pitches, seeing the evolution of the

pitchers, from that to this, from the mock pitches to this, I love that."

Participants are guided through key business fundamentals, including determining capital needs, refining financial projections, and outlining realistic

growth strategies.

"We go through the process of identifying what it is that you need for your business, how that will help you, how much money you need to do it, what is the projected logical, defensible growth," said Calloway. "When people

don't win the competition, they try to figure out how they can still hit those goals."

Where Retail Meets Community Impact

Second place and \$20,000 went to **La'Nesha Fraizer, co-founder of Bliss Books & Wine**. Her concept combines an independent bookstore with a wine bar, offering curated titles alongside beverages and community-focused programming.

Third place winner Tiffany Simmons of SknClusive Beauty Spa & Education Center in Raytown, Missouri, received \$10,000 to support the expansion of her skincare studio.

Together, the competition awarded a total of \$60,000 in prize money to participating entrepreneurs.

The space has become a gathering point for book clubs, events and conversations centered on culture and connection.

"It feels amazing. It feels unreal right now, I'm gonna go home and ugly cry," said Fraizer.

See KC G.I.F.T. Page 14 →

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Reinvesting in the Neighborhood: The Story of Neyan's Place

With support from the Central City Economic Development (CCED) Sales Tax Program, Harold and Diane Johnson transformed a fire-damaged six-plex into high-quality, fully leased housing — showing how community-rooted ownership strengthens neighborhood stability in Midtown Kansas City.

By Brian Escobar

On East 30th Street, between Paseo and Florida, a once fire-damaged six-plex now stands fully renovated and fully leased. Neyan's Place reflects a quiet but important shift in Midtown Kansas City: what it looks like when investment comes from within the community.

For Harold Johnson and his wife Diane, this was never just a rehabilitation project. It was a long-term commitment to neighborhood responsibility.

"This is Neyan's Place," Johnson said. "It's a legacy property for us. We have seven grandchildren. The name of our business is Seven J's LLC, and Neyan is the oldest granddaughter. So I have six more to do."

The project is designed to be something their family can eventually build upon. For the Johnsons, development is meant to be rooted in Kansas City and passed forward.

Rooted in Community

Johnson's perspective is shaped by growing up in neighborhoods where ownership and pride were visible block by block.

"I came up in a time where there was a true community right there on each block," he said. "There was a lot of

pride in the neighborhood."

Over time, that sense of consistency changed. As more residents gained access to opportunities elsewhere, many older neighborhoods lost the steady reinvestment that once sustained them.

"When people have more choices, the older neighborhoods kind of suffered," he said.

Projects like Neyan's Place are not just about adding units. They are about restoring presence, stability, and confidence in neighborhoods that have seen disinvestment over time.

A Project at Risk

The Johnsons acquired the six-unit building around 2020 in severely damaged condition. Much of the structure had to be rebuilt.

"It was horrible," Johnson said. "We had to redo everything else."

By the time construction was underway, he had already invested more than \$300,000. Then COVID-19 disrupted the process.

"I almost lost this project because I did it during 2021, and material costs were like three times what they are now," he said.

Rising costs, supply chain disruptions, and increasing labor expenses forced the project to a halt.

Still, stepping away was

never fully on the table.

"We're not quitters," he said. "You might beat me today, but we're coming back."

The Turning Point: CCED Support

Johnson was introduced to the Central City Economic Development (CCED) Sales Tax Program through local connections and presentations.

"I looked at the application and said, 'Hey, I can do this,'" he said.

The project was awarded approximately \$385,000 in CCED funding, a critical investment that helped bring the project across the finish line.

"It was such a blessing," Johnson said. "I was strained for the finances to complete it. I still had a whole major rehab to do."

With that support, the project moved from stalled to complete.

"We could actually fulfill most of the obligations of what we intended," he said.

The funding did not just complete the project. It preserved its quality.

Raising the Standard

At Neyan's Place, the goal was never to deliver the minimum. Johnson approached the project with a simple philosophy: provide the same level of quality he would expect for himself.

"What do you want for yourself?" he said. "I like to have nice stuff. So I want my individuals that are going to live in my places to have nice things."

Units include new LVP flooring, granite countertops, updated bathrooms, high-efficiency HVAC

systems, and new windows and sliding doors. Exterior improvements include front porch decks for each unit, shared rear access, and a leveled parking lot with planned gate improvements.

"I want people to have a sense of quality living," Johnson said. "I don't think that we should have an excuse for that no matter where we live."

Serving the Neighborhood

Today, Neyan's Place is fully leased. Tenants include working individuals and retirees, many earning between roughly \$30,000 and \$60,000 annually. Rents remain competitive with older units in the area, but the quality of the space is significantly higher.

"They want something nice," Johnson said. "And they don't want to necessarily have to live outside of the area in which they grew up."

"People have a sense of respect," he said. "They have a sense of pride because they know that the owner cares."

That pride contributes to broader neighborhood stability.

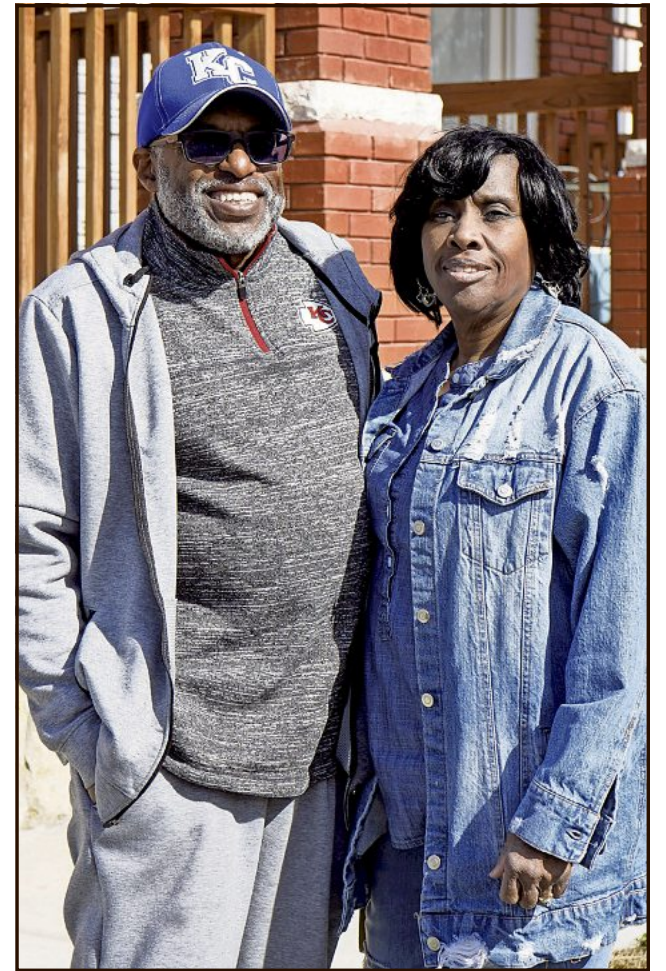
"People want to see more of it," he said. "We need to bring folk back."

A Long-Term Commitment

For the Johnsons, Neyan's Place is not a one-time project. Johnson plans to continue developing.

"I'm going to keep on being a developer," Johnson said. "I think people are going to like the product that we put out."

That vision also extends to the next generation. His grandchildren have already been involved in aspects of



Harold and Diane Johnson stand outside Neyan's Place, a once fire-damaged six-plex they transformed into quality housing rooted in long-term community investment.

the work, giving them early exposure to ownership and responsibility.

"We want to pass on what we have done," he said. "We intend to pass on something that is very good in quality."

Why It Matters

Projects like Neyan's Place highlight the role public and private partnership can play in neighborhood revitalization. For small, community-based developers, access to capital can determine whether a project stalls or succeeds.

"Projects like this won't be able to happen if we don't have the funding that the city's able to provide,"

Johnson said.

In this case, the combination of personal investment and CCED support made it possible to complete a project that now contributes to housing quality, neighborhood stability, and long-term community ownership.

Neyan's Place is one building. But it represents something larger: a model where local developers reinvest in their own neighborhoods, where public funding supports attainable housing, and where quality becomes part of the baseline rather than the exception.

It is, at its core, a reinvestment not just in property, but in place.

By Voice Health News

**New Guidance Questions
Lifelong Beta-Blocker Use After
Heart Attack**

For decades, patients who survived a heart attack were routinely told to stay on beta-blockers for life. But new research is challenging that long-standing approach, suggesting many stable patients may not need the medication indefinitely.

Beta-blockers, which lower heart rate and blood pressure, have been a cornerstone of post-heart attack care for more than 40 years. They were originally shown to reduce the risk of another cardiac event at a time when treatment options were more limited.

Now, experts say the science—and the standard of care—are evolving.

A major new study, known as the SMART-DECISION trial, found that stopping beta-blockers after one year was just as safe as continuing them in certain patients.

That finding marks a significant shift from traditional guidance, which often recommended lifelong use regardless of a patient's



long-term stability.

**The Link Between Dehydration
and Blood Pressure**

Not drinking enough fluids can send your blood pressure on a dangerous rollercoaster.

Blood is mostly water, so when you're dehydrated, your blood volume drops — leading to low blood pressure. That can reduce oxygen flow to your organs, causing dizziness, fainting, fatigue or confusion. In severe cases, it can lead to shock or organ damage.

"When you're dehydrated, you're not filling up the pipes enough for what your vascular system needs," says preventive cardiologist Dr. Luke Laffin.

But the body may overcorrect. Dehydration raises sodium levels, triggering a hormone called vasopressin that tightens blood vessels — causing blood pressure to rise. This can be especially risky for people with hypertension.

The best defense is simple: stay hydrated. Experts recommend about 125 ounces of fluid daily for

men and 91 ounces for women, though needs vary.

"Staying hydrated helps keep your body in balance," Laffin says.

**Too Young For Colon Cancer?
Think Again**

Colorectal cancer is rising among people under 50, even as rates decline in older adults due to screening. Doctors say the trend is real, though the exact cause remains unclear.

Experts point to lifestyle factors, including diets high in processed foods and red meat, low fiber

intake, poor gut health, inactivity and rising obesity. Genetics plays a role in some cases, but not all.

Younger patients are often diagnosed later because symptoms — like blood in the stool, bowel changes, fatigue or weight loss — are mistaken for less serious issues. With screening typically starting at 45, cancers are frequently found at more advanced stages.

The American Cancer Society recommends screening at 45, or earlier for those with family history, genetic conditions or symptoms.

Awareness is key: know your history, don't ignore changes and talk to a doctor.

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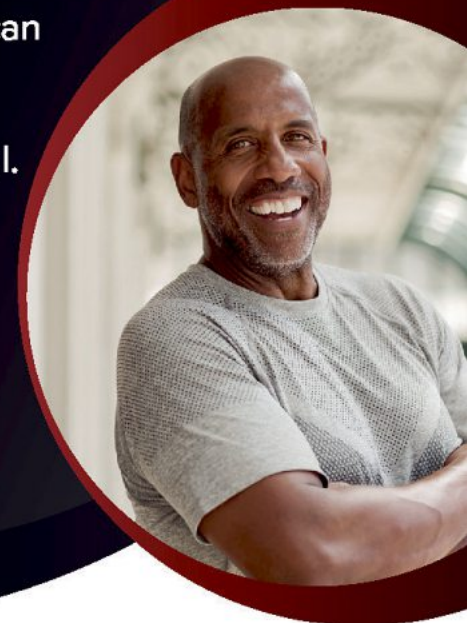
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Vote,
from Page 4 ↓

said during the Senate debate.

Critics, however, say the proposal could make registering to vote more difficult for some Americans, particularly those who rely on community-based outreach or lack easy access to required documents.

Voter registration drives, they note, often help reach people who may not otherwise sign up — including younger voters and those with limited time, transportation or access to government offices.

“There’s just a group of people and communities that is very difficult to get registered through normal means,” said Frederick Vélez III Burgos of the Hispanic Federation.

Opponents also argue that eliminating online and mail registration removes options that many voters currently depend on.

Even without federal action, some states have already begun tightening rules around voter registration drives and registration requirements, signaling a broader trend toward stricter election laws.

If passed, the SAVE America Act would take those changes nationwide, standardizing how Americans register to vote under a more controlled and document-driven system.

The bill’s future remains uncertain in the Senate, where it would need bipartisan support to advance.

But if approved, it would represent one of the most significant changes to voter registration in decades — reshaping both how people sign up to vote and the role community organizations play in the process.





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SLOT MACHINES,
from Page 5 ↓

used outside licensed casinos.

Facing that pressure, Torch's decision to shut down appears less voluntary than strategic.

The company told retailers it is acting to protect them from legal risk as criminal proceedings move forward.

The attorney general's office was more direct, saying the shutdown came "to avoid prosecution" — and warning that enforcement will continue against others still operating.

While prosecutors turn up the heat, lawmakers are still trying to decide what comes next.

A proposal moving through the Missouri legislature would replace the gray market with a state-run video lottery system, shifting control from private operators to the state. Machines would be licensed through the Missouri Lottery, required to pay out at least 80% of wagers, and generate revenue for education and local governments

— effectively ending the business model for companies like Torch.

But even that plan faces resistance from all sides.

Machine operators and convenience stores don't want new limits on a lucrative business. Casinos oppose the idea of expanding gambling outside their control. And lawmakers remain divided after years of failed attempts to reach consensus.

That leaves Missouri at a crossroads — with enforcement moving faster than policy.

For years, the gray market survived in the space between unclear laws and limited prosecution. Now, with criminal cases advancing and the state's largest operator pulling back, that space is shrinking.

Whether the end result is regulation, replacement or elimination, one thing is becoming clear:

Missouri is no longer looking the other way.

Source: Missouri Independent

DUBOIS, from Page 7 ↓

The project, which broke ground in 2024, will also help reduce odors associated with the plant and expand capacity to support regional growth.

A Leadership Transition Built on Continuity

In 2021, Webster sold the company to Cervente Sudduth, a former DuBois

engineer who had spent years with the firm earlier in his career.

Webster said the decision was intentional — choosing someone who understood the company's culture, its work and the relationships that had been built over time, rather than selling to an outside firm unfamiliar with the market.

Sudduth had grown

within DuBois before leaving to gain broader industry experience. When Webster began planning his exit, Sudduth returned, stepping into ownership after preparing to take on the role and positioning the company for its next phase of growth.

Today, DuBois continues to expand its capabilities while maintaining a steady presence in Wichita, with

Brehon still leading its efforts in the local market.

Celebrating 20 Years

The April 16 celebration will bring together many of the partners, clients and collaborators who have worked with DuBois over the past two decades — a reflection of the connections that helped build the firm's presence in Wichita.

KC G.I.F.T., from Page 10 ↓

Funding is expected to go toward expanding inventory, increasing programming and strengthening outreach efforts as the business continues to grow its footprint.

Turning Exposure into Opportunity

The Vision of Equity summit also included breakout sessions on such topics as banking and nonprofit strategy, offering a broader look at the resources available through Kansas City G.I.F.T.'s business center.

The programming is designed to extend beyond the competition, giving entrepreneurs access to tools and guidance at no cost. Calloway said the public-facing event also plays a role in connecting founders with new audiences while highlighting the range of businesses operating in Kansas City.

"Being able to bring this public and letting everybody else see the diversity and excellence of the Black businesses that we always get to see, it changes the narrative," he said.

"This is also customer acquisition for them," Calloway



Competitors in Kansas City G.I.F.T.'s Vision of Equity Business Summit and Pitch Competition. PHOTO BY NIKKI OVERFELT CHIFALU, STARLAND NEWS

continued. "New people are learning about the businesses that we have here."

The funding provides a

boost, but the preparation process continues to influence how each founder approaches growth, he said.

VETO, from Page 6 ↓

and restrict it only to voters who meet specific conditions, such as being out of town or unable to vote in person. Kelly said the bill could disenfranchise voters.

House Bill 2587 would require Kansas driver's licenses and IDs to display citizenship status. At polling places, anyone presenting an ID marked as a noncitizen but claiming to be eligible would be required to cast a provisional ballot. Critics say it could create confusion and added scrutiny for some voters.

House Bill 2437 would expand how Kansas maintains voter rolls by requiring regular cross-checks with federal and state databases, including immigration, motor vehicle and Social

Security records. It also requires state agencies to share personal data and limits online voter registration to .gov or state-approved websites. Supporters say it strengthens election integrity, while critics warn it could lead to eligible voters being wrongly flagged or removed.

Immigration Measures -- Cooperation With Ice and Tuition Restrictions

One measure would expand cooperation with federal immigration authorities, allowing and in some cases requiring state and local law enforcement to work more closely with ICE. Supporters say it strengthens enforcement of immigration laws, while critics argue it could discourage immigrants from reporting crimes or cooperating with

police out of fear.

A second bill would bar undocumented students from qualifying for in-state tuition at Kansas colleges and universities, reversing a long-standing policy that allowed certain students who grew up in Kansas to pay resident rates. Opponents say the change would put higher education out of reach for many students and hurt the state's workforce pipeline.

Kelly vetoed both measures, citing concerns about fairness, economic impact and the message they send to immigrant communities.

SB 391 — Blocks Local Tenant Protections

Senate Bill 391 would limit how far cities and counties can go in regulating landlords, effectively blocking local tenant protection

policies.

The bill would prevent local governments from requiring landlords to accept tenants using Section 8 or other housing assistance programs, where participation is typically voluntary. It also would protect landlords' ability to screen tenants using credit scores, eviction history, criminal background and other criteria, without local restrictions.

In addition, the bill would stop cities from capping security deposits or requiring policies such as giving tenants the first chance to buy a property.

In practice, the measure reinforces landlords' control over who they rent to and under what terms, while preventing cities from adopting rules aimed at expanding

housing access for low-income renters.

Supporters view it as a way to protect property rights and ensure consistent rules across the state. Opponents argue it removes local tools designed to address housing shortages and affordability.

Gov. Laura Kelly vetoed the bill, saying it would make it harder for Kansans to find affordable housing and takes decision-making power away from local communities.

HB 2468 — Expands Private School Tax Credits

House Bill 2468 would expand Kansas' private school scholarship tax credit program, raising the annual cap from \$10 million to \$15 million and maintaining a credit equal to 75% of donations.

The bill also would enroll

Kansas in a federal tax credit program set to begin in 2027, allowing donors to receive both state and federal tax credits for contributions.

Scholarships are distributed through nonprofit organizations and can be used at accredited private schools, including religious schools. The program has largely served low-income students, with a significant share of funding going to Catholic schools. The funds can also be used at private schools (in Wichita Urban Prep Academy is an example).

The bill passed 76-44 in the House and 27-12 in the Senate, short of the votes needed to override a veto.

Gov. Laura Kelly vetoed the measure, saying the state should prioritize funding public schools and special education.



Christine Crockett, 75
May 7, 1950 - April 2, 2026
Service will be held at 11 am on Fri., April 24 at St. Mary Missionary Baptist, 1648 E. 17th.

Pauline Boyce, 94
December 31, 1931 - March 29, 2026
Service will be held at 11 am on Mon., April 13 at Greater Pentecostal COGIC, 730 N. Cleveland.

William "Chicken Man" W. Irving, 74
November 15, 1951 - March 29, 2026
Service will be held at 10 am on April 18 at Community Baptist Church, 2525 E. 1st

Rose "Rosie" Mason, 85
July 1, 1940 - March 27, 2026
Service was held April 10 at Jackson Mortuary Chapel.

Helen McClain, 79
January 26, 1947 - March 27, 2026

Graveside Service was held April 3 at Old Mission Cemetery.

Isaac Lewellyn Sanders, 96
June 20, 1929 - March 25, 2026
Service was held April 10 at St. Mary's Missionary Baptist Church.

Amelia W. Scott, 88
November 1, 1937 - March 23, 2026

Service was held April 8 at St. Mary's Missionary Baptist.

Dr. John C. Gaston, 82
August 12, 1943 - March 21, 2026
Service was held April 2 at Greater Holy Temple COGIC.

Ella Mae Scott, 90
December 9, 1935 - March 21, 2026
Service will be held at 11 am on Fri., April 17 at Jackson Mortuary Chapel, 1125 E. 13th.

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32.01.29 – Polyurethane Concrete Slab Stabilization

Bids will be received by JE Dunn via BuildingConnected.com **until April 17, 2026, at 10:00 AM.**

PRE-BID CONFERENCE - A Pre-Bid Job Walk can be coordinated if needed for the purpose of answering any questions regarding the above scopes of work on the project.

JE Dunn invites subcontractors to call if any assistance is required or questions arise concerning work segmentation, work and contract requirements, or the form of proposal requested.

Questions should be directed to **Kent Le, Project Manager, by phone at (816) 984-5011, or by email at kent.le@jedunn.com.**

EOE, Minority/Female/Disability/Veteran/Sexual Orientation/Gender Identity

HUNT MIDWEST REAL ESTATE DEVELOPMENT, INC.
8300 N.E. UNDERGROUND DRIVE, SUITE 100
KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI 64161

Hunt Midwest, Logistics VII
In partnership with Port KC



INVITATION TO BIDDERS

Bids for the Hunt Midwest Logistics VII (the "Project") for Hunt Midwest Real Estate Development, Inc. ("Owner") to be located in in Clay County, 8701 NE 48th Street, Kansas City Missouri 64161 (see map attached) will be received by Chris Reasoner, Assistant Vice President of Construction Management for the Owner, via email at creasoner@huntmidwest.com ("Representative") RFP pricing window begins on Wednesday April 1st, 2026 and ends at 3:00pm on Thursday April 23rd, 2026. The proposed Work is set forth in the Bidding Documents. All bids must be in accordance with the Bidding Documents. Copies of the Bidding Documents, including, without limitation, Drawings, Specifications, Addenda and the Bidding Documents Manual, may be obtained from the Representative at the email address listed above, or download at the link provided in this document. The Bidding Documents Manual contains, among other things, the Instructions to Bidders, Bid Form, the Agreement Between Owner and Contractor, General Conditions of the Contract between Owner and General Contractor and certain approved forms for use in connection with the Project.

A Contractor's Qualification Statement is required with the submission of a bid. Bids will be received on a stipulated sum basis, including the alternates described in the Contract Documents, if any.

Project has Port KC MBE/WBE subcontractor participation goals of MBE 14.7% and WBE 14.4%. Project is part of the Port KC Construction Workforce Program with workforce goals of Minorities 10%, and Women 2%. Right of way or Public Work is Prevailing Wage. Port KC required monthly documentation is provided in the project manual for General Contractor compliance reporting.

The purpose of this RFP is to obtain proposals for the selection of a general contractor for the Hunt Midwest Logistics VII building.

Questions. Any general questions must be submitted to Chris Reasoner at creasoner@huntmidwest.com before Thursday, April 16th, 2026 at 9:00 AM Central Standard Time. Responses will be issued no later than April 20th, 2026 at 1:00 PM. All questions will be answered through an addendum to this RFP, and will be posted on the link listed below. Questions will be addressed as they come in and addendums will be issued along the way, until April 16th, 2026 at 9:00 AM.

Meet and Greet/Site Visit Conference Rain or Shine, we will host a Meet and Greet/ Site Visit Conference on Thursday, April 9th at 10:00am. We will meet at a location adjacent to the site, please see in the link provided below. Please use the map to find the site, as the building address is not currently recognized by map applications. I will create an attendance list with contact information for those who attend. I will publish that list in an addendum so that everyone will be able to contact each other for bidding purposes.

The Successful Bidder may be required to furnish a Performance and a Payment Bond in a form approved by Owner as security for the faithful performance of, and the payment of all bills and obligations arising from the performance of the Contract.

In submitting a Bid, Bidder recognizes that Owner is not bound to award the Contract to any Bidder pursuant to any process or criteria established by any law or any other requirements, and Owner may reject any and all bids in its sole discretion. Owner may award the Contract based upon any criteria Owner believes is in its best interest.

If Owner accepts a Bid submitted, Owner will submit to the selected Bidder a fully completed Agreement Between Owner and Contractor, and the selected Bidder shall sign and deliver the required number of counterparts of the Agreement Between Owner and Contractor and any related documents to Owner within five (5) days of receipt of such documents.

Drawings can be downloaded beginning April 1st, 2026 at:
<https://app.box.com/s/zqjbcmb5thop9dr1i80cpreywm6rvmr>

Recap of Important Dates

- Out for RFP 4/1/2026
- Site Visit/Meet and Greet Conference 4/9/2026 at 10:00am
- Addendum Questions Due 4/16/2026 at 9:00am
- Addendum Answers Issued 4/20/2026 at 1:00pm
- RFP Due Date 4/23/2026 at 3:00pm



Fraud Prevention



Fight fraud. Shred it!

AARP Fraud Watch Network™ can help you protect yourself against identity theft. Join us for a free document-shredding event in your community.

Reserve your spot for an AARP Kansas shredding event. Your documents will be shredded on-site, free of charge.

Join us for a free shred event:

April 18, 2026. 9:30 - 11:30 a.m.

WSU Hughes Metroplex

North Parking Lot

For more information or to register scan the QR Code below:

