THE VOICE

A Trusted Voice From The Community's Perspective

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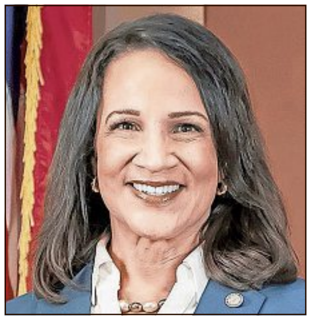
Eight Black Candidates for Governor Make History in 2026

After nearly 250 years in which only three Black Americans have been elected governor, eight Black major-party nominees will appear on ballots this November

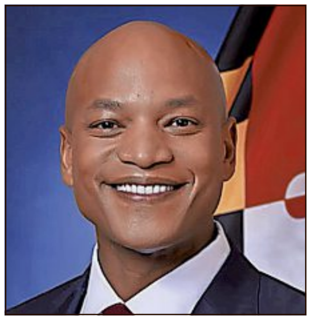

Keisha Lance Bottoms


Byron Donalds


Lisa Demuth


David Crowley


Aaron Ford


Wes Moore

When I saw that eight Black candidates had advanced to the general election for governor this November, I had to stop and think about that number.

Eight. In one election.

Considering how few Black governors this country has elected in nearly 250 years, I think that's exceptional — and a political milestone worth recognizing regardless of party.

Five Democrats and three Republicans have advanced to the general election, creating an unprecedented field of Black major-party nominees across eight states.

The Democrats are **Keisha Lance Bottoms in Georgia, Aaron Ford in Nevada, Jermaine Johnson in South Carolina, David Crowley in Wisconsin and incumbent Gov. Wes Moore in Maryland**.

Republicans **Byron Donalds in Florida, John James in Michigan and Lisa Demuth** in Minnesota have also won their parties' nominations.

A Remarkably Short List

To appreciate why eight candidates caught my attention, consider the history.

Douglas Wilder of Virginia became the first Black person elected governor of a state in 1989 — more than two centuries after the nation's founding.

Massachusetts voters elected **Deval Patrick** in 2006. Sixteen years later, Maryland voters elected Moore.

That's it. Those are the only three Black Americans ever elected governor.

New York's **David Paterson** also served as governor, from 2008 to 2010, after Gov. Eliot Spitzer resigned, but Paterson was not elected to the office.

Now, in a single election, voters could significantly expand a list that has remained remarkably short.

The historic possibilities go well beyond the number of candidates.

Bottoms, the former mayor of Atlanta, and Demuth, speaker of the Minnesota House, are seeking to accomplish something no Black woman has ever done: win election as governor of a U.S. state.

Several candidates could become their state's first Black governor.

Ford could become Nevada's first; Donalds, Florida's; James, Michigan's; and Crowley, Wisconsin's. South Carolina has never elected a Black governor either, a distinction Johnson hopes to change.

Moore is the exception. He already made history when Maryland voters elected him in 2022. He's seeking a second term and is currently the nation's only Black governor.

Certainly, winning a nomination is not the same as winning in November. Some of these candidates face difficult races.

But I don't think we should overlook what has already happened. Eight Black major-party candidates for governor, Democrats and Republicans, on ballots in the same election is something this country has never seen before.

Whatever happens Nov. 3, that's history worth noting.

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Beyond MWBE: KC Unveils Plan to Give Small Businesses a Shot at City Contracts

New system targets local and emerging businesses with set-asides, faster payments and help competing for city contracts

By Voice News Service

Kansas City is changing how it helps smaller companies compete for city contracts, replacing a successful 45-year-old minority- and women-owned business program with a system based instead on business size and local presence.

The old Minority- and Women-Owned Business Enterprise program, established in 1981, helped numerous minority- and women-owned construction, engineering and other firms get a foothold in city contracting, build experience and develop into financially successful businesses.

The city isn't abandoning the program because officials believed it had failed. The change came after Missouri Attorney General Catherine Hanaway sued Kansas City, arguing its race- and gender-based contracting preferences violated the Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment.

Rather than risk having the program dismantled by the courts, the City Council unanimously approved a race- and gender-neutral replacement designed to continue helping businesses that have traditionally struggled to compete for city work.

How the New Program Works

The replacement creates three levels of businesses.

Local Business Enterprises (LBE) will be eligible for participation goals on major construction contracts of $25 million or more.

Local Small Business Enterprises (LSBE) will be eligible for participation goals on contracts of $400,000 or more.

Emerging Business Enterprises (EBE) — the smallest companies — can compete for contracts under $400,000 that are set aside for them and receive bid incentives designed to make them more competitive.

The emerging-business provisions also address a major obstacle for small contractors: cash flow. EBEs can receive up to 10% of a contract upfront, have no retainage withheld and be paid every two weeks. That could help businesses cover payroll, equipment and materials without having large cash reserves.

The city will continue mentor-protégé and joint-venture opportunities and assistance with bonding, financing and technical support.

Could It Open the Door Wider?

Despite the old program's success, some contractors said it had shortcomings.

Gabe Perez, president of Unified Contractors, said the same established certified companies sometimes repeatedly received work while newer and smaller businesses struggled to break into the system.

The new EBE category could address some of that by directing smaller contracts and additional assistance specifically toward less-established firms.

Still, Perez worries that replacing a program specifically designed to overcome racial and gender barriers with one based on business size won't necessarily produce the same results.

"You can't simply change the title of an ordinance and take the minority and women out and put 'small business' and expect it to work," Perez said.

Mayor Quinton Lucas is optimistic.

"The goal is to continue to support the types of contractors we've supported for years," Lucas said.

Fahteema Parrish, center, owner of Parrish & Sons Construction, talks with members of her team. Her Black woman-owned company is among the businesses that grew through opportunities created by Kansas City's Minority- and Women-Owned Business Enterprise program. After more than four decades, the city is ending the MWBE program and replacing it with a race- and gender-neutral small-business contracting program.

Why the Price of Beef Won't be Coming Down Soon

America's cattle herd is at a 75-year low, and drought, rising production costs and the slow biology of cattle mean rebuilding it won't happen quickly.

By Bonita Gooch
Editor-in-Chief

If you've suffered sticker shock buying hamburger or steak lately, you're not imagining it. Beef prices have been climbing for several years as the nation's cattle supply has tightened. In June, beef and veal prices were **11.8% higher than a year earlier,** and USDA expects beef prices to rise about **10.7% during 2026.**

The simplest explanation is supply and demand: **Americans still want beef, but there aren't enough cattle.**

The United States had **86.2 million cattle and calves at the beginning of 2026, the smallest herd in roughly 75 years,** down from 94.7 million in 2019. The U.S. herd peaked at about **132 million in 1975.**

Yet farmers have become remarkably efficient. Better genetics, nutrition and management allow today's cattle to produce considerably more beef per animal. That's why the country can produce nearly as much beef with millions fewer cattle. But that efficiency is being tested as the herd continues shrinking.

With beef prices continuing to climb, shoppers are feeling the impact at the grocery store. Behind those higher prices is a U.S. cattle herd that has fallen to its lowest level in roughly 75 years.

You Can't Produce a Cow Overnight

Here's what makes fixing a beef shortage difficult: **a cow generally produces only one calf a year.**

Like humans, cattle have a pregnancy lasting about nine months. After birth, the calf needs roughly another **15 to 24 months** to reach slaughter. From breeding a cow until her calf becomes beef can easily take **two years or more.**

To expand the herd, ranchers must also keep young females — heifers — for breeding rather than sell them at today's high cattle prices.

USDA counted **27.6 million beef cows** at the beginning of 2026, down another 1%, while the calf crop fell 2%.

Then There's Drought

The cost of getting cattle to market has also increased, starting with feeding them.

Cattle spend much of their lives grazing. When grass isn't available, ranchers supplement with hay. Later, cattle sent to feedlots are generally finished on energy-rich rations containing corn and other feeds.

Grass is relatively inexpensive when nature provides it. **Hay isn't.**

Years of drought across cattle country have reduced pasture, forcing ranchers to buy more feed or reduce their herds. Many reduced their herds so available grass would stretch farther, contributing to today's low cattle numbers.

Drought can also reduce local hay production. When hay is scarce, ranchers may pay higher prices and additional transportation costs to bring it in from farther away.

Climate change adds to the long-term concern as hotter conditions increase evaporation and water stress in areas already prone to drought.

Then There's Groundwater

Western Kansas' enormous cattle, feedlot and meatpacking industry developed partly around the **High Plains/Ogallala Aquifer,** which made large-scale irrigation of corn and other feed crops possible. But in many areas, groundwater is being pumped much faster than nature replaces it.

Kansas State University researchers found that reducing groundwater pumping by 20% would sacrifice some agricultural production initially, but conserving the water could allow the region to produce **more corn and cattle over the long term** than continuing current pumping until wells become uneconomical.

That leaves Kansas with a difficult choice: maximize production today or conserve enough water to sustain agriculture for future generations.

Can Imports Help?

Somewhat, but they aren't a quick fix.

Imports of live Mexican cattle have been restricted because of the New World screwworm, a dangerous livestock parasite. USDA plans a phased reopening of the border beginning Aug. 24, but many of those imported animals will be feeder cattle that still must be raised before slaughter.

The Trump administration has also expanded tariff-free imports of lean beef from Argentina by **80,000 metric tons in 2026,** primarily to increase supplies used for ground beef. But that's small compared with the overall U.S. market.

At the same time, U.S. beef exports are expected to decline. China requires foreign meat-processing plants to be registered before their beef can be sold there. Registrations for hundreds of U.S. plants expired in 2025 and most haven't been renewed, sharply reducing shipments to China.

Even with more U.S. beef staying home, supplies remain tight. USDA expects the country to import about **6.1 billion pounds of beef in 2026 while exporting about 2.3 billion pounds.**

See **BEEF,** Page 11 →

Thousands of Kansans Are Losing SNAP. Here's What You Need to Know About the New Work Rules

More than 32,000 Kansans, including 14,000 children, have left SNAP as new federal work requirements take effect. Advocates worry some eligible families are getting caught in the rules and paperwork.

By Bonita Gooch
Editor-in-Chief

More than 32,000 Kansans have dropped from the state's food-assistance rolls since last summer, including nearly 7,000 in the most recent month alone, according to Kansas Appleseed. More than 14,000 Kansas children have also lost benefits.

Some of the decline was expected. H.R. 1, the federal legislation signed by President Donald Trump in July 2025, expanded SNAP work requirements to thousands of additional adults.

But advocates say people who remain eligible may also be losing benefits because they don't understand the new requirements, didn't receive notices or encountered recertification and processing problems.

"We're concerned about reports of families losing benefits simply because they were never notified about the steps needed to keep them," said Josh Powers, public policy and advocacy strategist for Harvesters.

How the Federal Work Requirement Works

H.R. 1 significantly expanded work rules for people the federal government calls "able-bodied adults without dependents," or ABAWDs.

People subject to the rule generally must **work or participate in qualifying activities for at least 80 hours per month — roughly 20 hours per week — to avoid a SNAP time limit.**

Those hours can include paid employment, qualifying volunteer work, certain job-training or employment programs, or a combination. Someone working 10 hours a week, for example, could potentially combine that with 10 hours of qualifying training.

An ABAWD who doesn't meet the requirement and isn't exempt generally can receive SNAP for only **three months during a 36-month period.**

Not everyone has to meet the requirement. Exemptions include certain people who are pregnant, unable to work because of a physical or mental limitation, or living with a child under age 14.

What H.R. 1 Changed

The 20-hour work requirement isn't new. **What changed is who has to meet it.**

Before H.R. 1, the ABAWD time limit generally applied through age **54**. The law raised the age to **64,** bringing adults ages 55 through 64 under the requirement unless they qualify for an exemption.

The law also lowered the age of a child who exempts an adult in the household from **under 18 to under 14**. A parent whose youngest child is 15, for example, may now have to meet the work requirement.

H.R. 1 also eliminated special exemptions for **veterans, people experiencing homelessness and certain former foster youth under 24.** They may now have to meet the work requirement unless another exemption applies.

More than 32,000 Kansans, including more than 14,000 children, have left SNAP since July 2025 as new federal work requirements and eligibility rules take effect. Anti-hunger advocates worry some eligible families are losing food assistance because they don't understand the new requirements or are getting caught in paperwork and processing delays.

Kansas DCF estimates the changes could affect about **10,284 Kansans** because of the new child-age limit, **2,800** because of the higher adult age limit and 3,760 because of the eliminated exemptions.

Kansas Has a Separate 30-Hour Rule

Here's where things get more complicated.

The federal ABAWD rule generally requires **20 hours per week of work or qualifying activities** to avoid the SNAP time limit.

Kansas separately operates a mandatory **SNAP Employment and Training program, or E&T,** for certain recipients without dependents who aren't working at least **30 hours per week.**

E&T isn't a 30-hour class. Participants can be assigned ongoing activities such as job-search training, GED or high school completion, career and technical education and other employment preparation.

That means **20 hours and 30 hours refer to different requirements.**

Someone working 25 hours per week may satisfy the federal ABAWD requirement but still be required to participate in Kansas' E&T program because they aren't working 30 hours.

Parents with dependent children on their SNAP case generally aren't subject to mandatory E&T simply because they work fewer than 30 hours.

Children Account for a Troubling Share of the Losses

Children aren't subject to the ABAWD work requirement, yet they account for a striking share of Kansas' SNAP decline.

The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities found children accounted for nearly half of Kansans who had left SNAP by April. Kansas

See **SNAP,** Page **11** →

THE BATTLE FOR AMERICA'S AFFORDABLE HOMES

Investors Are Buying *America's Affordable Houses*

In Kansas and Missouri, investors are increasingly competing with first-time and moderate-income buyers for some of the least expensive homes on the market

By Bonita Gooch
Editor-in-Chief

Increasingly, it's an investor.

Investors purchased about 534,000 homes nationwide in 2025, accounting for 11.3% of all home purchases, according to a Realtor.com analysis of property deed records. But that national number hides an important trend: Investors are especially active in affordable Midwestern markets and often buy the same lower-priced houses sought by first-time and moderate-income buyers.

Kansas City is one of the clearest examples.

Investors purchased 21.2% of all homes sold in the Kansas City metro in 2025 — more than one out of five — giving Kansas City the second-highest investor purchase rate among the nation's 50 largest metropolitan areas, behind only Memphis.

Even more significant is what they're buying.

Small investors in Kansas City paid a median price of $240,000, compared with $347,000 for the overall market — a difference of more than $100,000. That puts investors squarely in the portion of the market where people with moderate incomes are most likely to look for their first home.

Nationally, the pattern is similar. Small investors paid a median $330,000 for homes in 2025, about 25% below the overall national median of $440,000.

Investors Already Own Thousands of KC Houses

Years of investor buying have already changed Kansas City's housing market.

The nine-county Kansas City region has about 157,000 single-family rental houses, according to an analysis by the Mid-America Regional Council. Owners with portfolios of 10 or more properties control nearly 30,000 of them — almost one-fifth of the region's single-family rental market.

Just 33 companies control nearly 14,000 houses, and five companies own almost 8,000.

The concentration is even greater in Jackson County, where investors owning 100 or more properties control approximately 45% of the single-family rental market.

Those numbers don't mean investors own 45% of all houses in Jackson County. They mean they control 45% of the county's houses that are being rented as single-family homes.

Meanwhile, investors continue buying.

In 2024, they accounted for 21.2% of home purchases in Missouri and 18.4% in Kansas, among the highest rates in the country.

Why Investors Want Affordable Houses

For an investor who plans to rent a house, the math is relatively simple: Buy where houses are inexpensive enough that the rent collected can produce an attractive return.

The concern isn't that a house disappears when an investor buys it. Someone can still live there.

What disappears is another house from the inventory available for families to buy.

A $200,000 or $250,000 house that might have allowed a working family to become homeowners instead becomes a rental. The family living there pays rent, while the investor owns the appreciating asset and builds equity.

Investor purchases aren't the only reason homes have become less affordable. The United States has a longstanding housing shortage, construction costs have risen and mortgage rates remain a barrier for many buyers. Investors also provide single-family rental homes for people who cannot or don't want to buy.

The concern grows when investors concentrate their purchases among the relatively limited supply of affordable houses.

Wichita Is Seeing Investor Interest, Too

Wichita doesn't appear to have the same concentration of huge Wall Street landlords found in some larger metropolitan areas, but investors remain active locally.

That may help explain something familiar to many Wichita homeowners: unsolicited calls, texts and postcards asking whether they're interested in selling.

Those solicitations are part of an industry built around finding houses that can be purchased, renovated, resold or converted into rentals.

For an individual homeowner, a cash offer can be attractive. For the larger community, however, the cumulative effect can be different when affordable owner-occupied houses steadily become investment properties.

Congress Steps In

Concern about institutional investors buying single-family houses has now reached Washington.

The bipartisan 21st Century ROAD to Housing Act became federal law July 11. One section is pointedly titled **"Homes Are for People, Not Corporations."**

The law generally prohibits large institutional investors — defined as for-profit entities controlling at least 350 single-family homes — from buying additional existing single-family houses once the restrictions take effect, although there are exceptions.

Congress did not require investors to sell houses they already own.

The restriction also won't stop smaller investors, who account for most investor purchases. Large institutional investors currently represent only about 1% of all single-family home purchases nationally.

So the new law may slow the expansion of massive corporate portfolios without ending competition between investors and families for affordable houses.

Why Homeownership Matters

For families, what's at stake is more than having a place to live.

INVESTORS ARE BUYING IN
21.2% of Kansas City-area homes sold in 2025 were purchased by investors
More than 1 in 5
$240,000 Median price paid by small investors in Kansas City
$347,000 Median price for all KC-area home purchases
Investors are buying heavily at the more affordable end of the market.

INVESTORS ALREADY OWN THOUSANDS
~30,000 Kansas City-area single-family rentals are controlled by owners with 10+ properties
~14,000 are controlled by just 33 companies
Nearly 8,000 are owned by only five companies
45% of Jackson County's single-family rental homes are controlled by investors owning 100+ properties
This is 45% of rental houses — not all houses in Jackson County.

18.4% KANSAS | 21.2% MISSOURI
Share of 2024 home purchases made by investors
Sources: Realtor.com investor reports; Mid-America Regional Council

Homeownership can provide greater housing stability, more predictable housing costs for owners with fixed-rate mortgages and the freedom to repair and improve a property without a

See **INVESTORS**, Page 11 →

When the Investor Becomes the Landlord

Not all investor-owned rentals create problems, but a Kansas City lawsuit alleges one of the nation's largest corporate landlords put profits and cost-cutting ahead of maintaining safe homes for tenants

By Bonita Gooch

Investor-owned rental houses provide an important housing option for families who aren't ready or don't want to buy. But as investors acquire more single-family homes, another question is gaining attention: **What kind of landlords are they?**

A new Kansas City lawsuit raises that question about FirstKey Homes, one of the nation's largest single-family rental companies.

Three Kansas City-area families allege FirstKey and related companies were quick to enforce rent and other financial obligations but repeatedly failed to adequately address mold, flooding, electrical hazards and other dangerous conditions in their homes.

The allegations have not been proven in court.

FirstKey manages more than 50,000 single-family rental homes in nearly 30 markets nationally. The lawsuit says FirstKey-related companies have acquired about **540 properties in the Greater Kansas City area since 2011.**

The plaintiffs contend their experiences weren't simply individual maintenance failures. Their lawsuit alleges FirstKey's corporate structure emphasizes financial returns and cost reduction while delaying or limiting necessary repairs.

Families Describe Dangerous Conditions

Darius Dodson says his family dealt with mold, flooding, sewage backup, defective locks and electrical problems in the Kansas City house they rented beginning in 2019.

According to the lawsuit, one electrical outlet caught fire but wasn't repaired, causing the family to stop using living-room outlets.

Dodson also alleges a furnace problem persisted for about two years before a contractor he hired discovered a rusted exhaust pipe. The lawsuit says the Kansas City Fire Department determined the condition created a potentially life-threatening carbon-monoxide hazard. It was then repaired.

Kristina Thomas and her family moved into a FirstKey property in Raytown in 2022. Before signing the lease, they noticed signs of previous water problems and say they specifically asked whether the basement had water-intrusion issues. They allege they were told it did not.

They found standing water in the basement their first day in the house.

The lawsuit says water problems continued for years before an independent contractor discovered extensive mold contamination in the basement and air ducts. The family was eventually told to leave the house immediately.

Kemba Lee, a pregnant mother of three when she moved into a Northland Kansas City house in 2024, alleges repeated basement flooding and mold.

See **LANDLORD**, Page 11 →

FIRSTKEY BY THE NUMBERS

50,000+ homes managed nationally

~540 properties acquired by related entities in Greater KC

1,000+ landlord-tenant cases filed in the KC area since 2011, according to the lawsuit

517 Jackson County landlord-tenant actions in 2024
~450 in 2025
~147 so far in 2026

Before You Sell Your House to an Investor, Know What You're Giving Up

By Bonita Gooch
Editor-in-Chief

Those persistent calls and cash offers may be convenient, but homeowners should understand what their property is worth before saying yes

If you own a house, you've probably gotten the call, text, letter or postcard.

"Would you consider selling your property?"

Sometimes they know your name and address. Sometimes they keep calling even though you never put your house on the market.

There's a reason investors are looking for houses. They believe they can make money from them.

Investors accounted for 18.4% of home purchases in Kansas in 2024 and 21.2% in Missouri, according to a Realtor.com analysis of property records. They're particularly interested in lower-priced houses that can be renovated, resold or converted to rentals.

So before accepting an unsolicited offer — particularly one promising cash and a quick closing — make sure you know what your property is worth.

Convenience Has a Price

Cash buyers typically sell homeowners on convenience: no repairs, no cleaning, no real estate agent and no waiting for a buyer to qualify for a mortgage. Some deals can close within days.

For someone facing foreclosure, dealing with an unwanted inherited property, needing expensive repairs or simply wanting to move quickly, that convenience can be valuable.

But an investor also needs to make money on the deal. That may mean buying below market value and reselling the house or keeping it as a rental that produces income while potentially increasing in value.

Before accepting an offer, get an independent idea of your home's value. Talk with a real estate professional, check recent sales of comparable nearby houses or consider an appraisal.

Don't rely solely on the person trying to buy your house to tell you what it's worth.

Think Before Selling an Inherited Home

Families should be particularly careful before quickly selling a house inherited from a parent or grandparent.

A paid-off or low-debt house may be one of the family's most valuable assets. Keeping it could provide housing for a child or grandchild, potentially generate rental income or continue appreciating in value.

Of course, keeping a house costs money. There are taxes, insurance, maintenance and repairs, and multiple heirs may disagree about what to do with the property. Sometimes selling is the best decision.

The point isn't never sell. It's don't sell without understanding what you're giving up.

You Can Decide Who Buys It

Homeowners who decide to sell don't necessarily have to sell to an investor.

Putting a house on the open market gives individual buyers a chance to compete for it and can give the seller a better idea of its actual market value.

That matters beyond the individual transaction. When an investor buys an affordable house and converts it to a long-term rental, that house is no longer available for another family to buy and begin building equity.

Homeownership has long been one of the primary ways American families build and pass along wealth.

So the next time someone unexpectedly calls wanting to buy your house, don't be pressured by the promise of quick cash.

If they want your house that badly, make sure you understand its value before you let it go.

Senior Connect Packs Brewer Center for Successful Senior Expo

Senior Connect 2026 packed Wichita's Carl Brewer Community Center Aug. 14 for a day filled with information, fellowship and plenty of fun.

A capacity crowd of seniors visited exhibitors, attended workshops, received health screenings, danced, took photos and connected with friends old and new.

The free Community Legacy Award Luncheon also reached capacity, recognizing seniors who continue to make a difference in the community.

Throughout the day, attendees gathered useful information on health, legal and financial issues, technology and community resources. But Senior Connect was about more than information. The energy throughout the Brewer Center was upbeat, social and fun, with plenty of laughter, music and conversation.

The event was designed around three simple words: Connect. Discover. Live Well. Judging from the response, Senior Connect delivered on all three.

Since the event, participants have continued to share positive reviews, with one question coming up again and again: **"When are you doing it again?"**

With a turnout and response like this, the answer is easy: **Senior Connect will definitely be back.**

More Connect Event photos at communityvoiceks.com.

Senior Connect Legacy Award winners were Sandra Rankin (standing right) and Marvin Stone (sitting left) with The Voice Publisher Bonita Gooch and Pat Stone.

ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF XAYWAY CLICK AND PRINTS

Urinary Incontinence: Diapers Aren't the Only Answer

From simple exercises to medications, injections and outpatient procedures, there are treatments that can help people regain bladder control.

For millions of people who experience bladder leakage, the first solution may seem obvious: pads, protective underwear or adult diapers.

But those products manage the leakage.

They don't treat what's causing it.

Urinary incontinence — the loss of bladder control — is common, particularly as people get older, but it isn't necessarily something you simply have to live with. Depending on what's causing the problem, treatment can range from exercises you can do at home to physical therapy, medication, injections or medical procedures.

The first step is figuring out what kind of incontinence you have.

Not All Bladder Leakage Is the Same

One of the most common types is stress incontinence, which causes urine to leak when pressure is placed on the bladder. Coughing, sneezing, laughing, exercising, lifting something heavy or even getting out of a chair can trigger leakage.

Weak or stretched pelvic-floor muscles are often involved. These muscles help support the bladder and urethra. Pregnancy, childbirth, menopause, pelvic surgery and other changes can weaken that support.

Protective underwear can help manage urinary incontinence, but it doesn't treat the underlying problem. Depending on the cause, a range of treatments may help reduce or even stop bladder leakage.

Urge incontinence, sometimes associated with overactive bladder, is different. It causes a sudden, powerful need to urinate. The bladder muscle may contract when it shouldn't, and a person may not reach the bathroom in time.

Some people have mixed **incontinence,** meaning they experience both stress and urge symptoms.

Because treatments differ, persistent or worsening leakage is worth discussing with a healthcare provider rather than assuming it's simply part of aging.

Start With the Simplest Solutions

Treatment often begins without medication or surgery.

Pelvic-floor exercises, commonly called Kegels, strengthen the muscles that help control urination. They can be done almost anywhere and cost nothing, but improvement generally requires doing them correctly and consistently.

Bladder training can also help, particularly with urgency. Instead of immediately going to the bathroom every time the urge strikes, people gradually work toward longer intervals between bathroom visits.

For people who need more help, **pelvic-floor physical therapy** provides specialized training. A therapist can determine whether the correct muscles are being used and teach exercises and techniques for better bladder control.

Women with stress incontinence may also benefit from a **pessary,** a removable silicone device placed in the vagina to help support the bladder and urethra. It requires fitting by a healthcare provider but doesn't require surgery.

Medication and Injections Are Options, Too

For people with overactive bladder or urge incontinence, prescription medications can help relax the bladder or reduce unwanted bladder contractions.

If those treatments aren't successful, **Botox isn't just for wrinkles.**

A healthcare provider can inject small amounts of Botox into the bladder muscle. The medication helps calm an overactive bladder and can reduce urgency and leakage. The effects aren't permanent, so injections may need to be repeated. Botox can occasionally make it difficult to completely empty the bladder, so patients should discuss the benefits and risks with their provider.

Another injection treats a different problem.

Urethral bulking agents are used primarily for stress incontinence. A filler-like material is injected into tissue around the urethra, adding bulk that helps it close more effectively and keep urine from leaking. It's a nonsurgical procedure, although additional treatments may eventually be needed.

When More Treatment Is Needed

People with persistent urge incontinence may also be candidates for nerve stimulation, which uses electrical impulses to influence the nerves involved in bladder control. Some treatments stimulate a nerve near the ankle, while another approach uses a small implanted device that targets nerves near the lower spine.

For stress incontinence that doesn't improve with less-invasive treatments, surgery may be considered. A common option is a sling procedure, which provides additional support beneath the urethra to help prevent leakage when coughing, sneezing or exercising.

The important point is that there isn't one solution for everyone — and protective underwear isn't the only choice.

Bladder leakage can keep people from exercising, traveling, attending social events or simply feeling comfortable away from home. Instead of quietly adapting their lives around the nearest bathroom, people experiencing incontinence can ask their healthcare provider — including a urologist or urogynecologist — what's causing the leakage and which treatments might help.

Sometimes the first step toward better bladder control may be surprisingly simple.

Roundtrees Mark 75 Years of Marriage Surrounded by Family

Eddis and Reuben Roundtree marked an extraordinary milestone this summer, celebrating **75 years of marriage** surrounded by family and friends at Pearson Family Farm in Wichita.

The couple married on July 29, 1951,continuing a love story that began when they were teenagers in Shreveport, Louisiana.

Eddis was 16 and Reuben was 19 when they met at the wedding of his brother and her aunt. They later married and eventually followed family members to Wichita, drawn by the city's growing employment opportunities.

Reuben worked a variety of jobs before beginning a long career with what was then Soy Rich, later Cargill. He retired as a plant operator after a **45-year** career with the company.

Eddis pursued a career in nursing, attending St. Joseph School of Nursing and working at St. Francis Hospital. At age 50, she returned to school at St. Mary of the Plains to earn her registered nursing credentials. She eventually retired from the Robert J. Dole VA Medical Center.

The Roundtrees raised seven children, and since 2019, all seven have once again lived in Wichita after several spent years living elsewhere. Their son, Reuben Jr., is a pastor, and the family has helped establish New Growth Heights Seventh-day Adventist Mission.

Family was fittingly at the center of the anniversary celebration. Children, grandchildren, nieces, nephews and other relatives gathered at Pearson Family Farm, where the festivities included swimming, activities for the children and plenty of time for visiting in the gazebo.

The Roundtrees have over 25 grandchildren, 50 great grandchildren and 15 great grandchildren.

After 75 years, Eddis and Reuben's marriage has grown into a legacy that now stretches across children, grandchildren, extended family and ministry — all rooted in a chance meeting at a Louisiana wedding more than seven decades ago.

July 29, 1951

75 Years later

55 Years of Love, Family and Faith

Wanda and Albert Brown's love story began with a glance across a Wichita grocery store.

Wanda was still in high school when she met Albert, who was sacking groceries at Jabara's near 13th and Piatt. Their eyes met, he struck up a conversation and after a few conversations, she invited him over for dinner and to meet her parents.

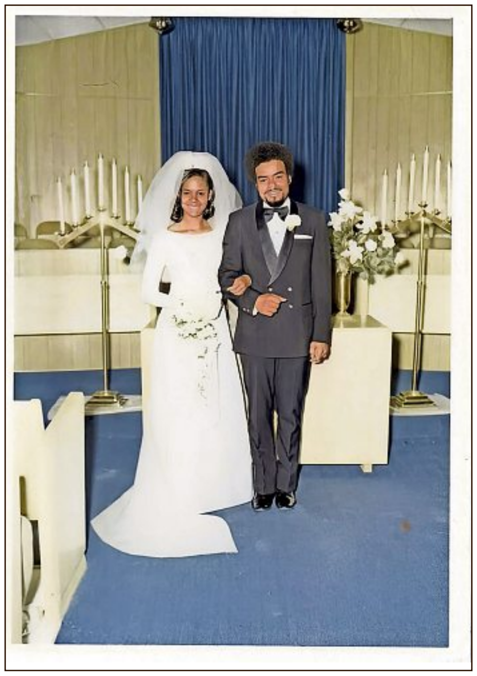
That was important. Wanda grew up with four sisters and no brothers, and Albert quickly became part of the family.

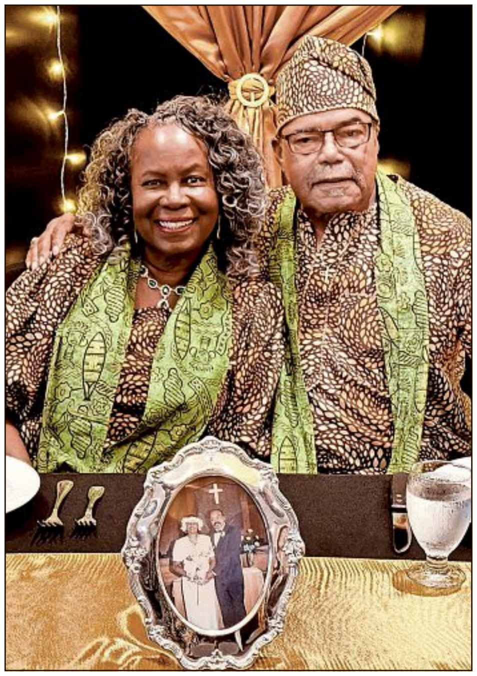
"He would come to the house for parties and Sunday dinners," Wanda recalled. There were also trips to the movies and plenty of time spent simply getting to know each other.

The couple married June 19, 1971, at Grant Chapel AME Church in Wichita. This summer, they celebrated 55 years of marriage.

Over the decades, both built careers while raising three daughters, all of whom attended and graduated from Grambling State University. Albert worked for Excel and later Beech Aircraft, where he retired. Wanda worked at Cigna Healthcare, spent time as a teacher's assistant and eventually retired from the state after working with SRS in adoptions.

Their family has grown to include five grandchildren, and family remains at the center of their lives.





The Browns also know how to enjoy themselves. They have traveled extensively, including several cruises and trips throughout the Caribbean, and they enjoy dominoes, cards and board games.

They remain active at church and the Northeast Senior Center, where both participate in activities and help with events.

After 55 years, they have also learned the value of togetherness — and a little time apart. Albert still drives a school bus, something Wanda jokes she appreciates because it gives them each some space.

Share Your Milestones

The Community Voice wants to help celebrate the special milestones in the lives of our readers and their families.

Is someone you love celebrating a **70th, 80th, 90th or 100th birthday?** We especially love those centenarians! Or maybe there's a special wedding anniversary coming up — **25 years, 50 years or even longer.**

We want to hear about it.

Send us information about the person or couple, along with a good photo and details about what makes their story special. Tell us a little about their family, career, community involvement and, for couples, the secret to making love last.

Email your celebrations and photos to **guillory@tcvpub.com** for consideration for publication in The Community Voic

Your family's milestones are part of our community's history — and they're worth celebrating.

Mary L. James, 81
Apr 24, 1945 — Aug 11, 2026
Service was held on Aug. 19 at St. James Missionary Baptist Church.

Johnnie L. Smith, 86
Sep 28, 1939 — Aug 4, 2026
Service was held Aug. 13 at Jackson Mortuary.

Mark Daniels, 62
Nov 28, 1963 — Aug 4, 2026
Service was held on Aug. 15 at Jackson Mortuary.

Catherine Williams, 96
Dec 29, 1929 — Aug 4, 2026
Service will be held at 12 pm on Sat.,, Aug. 29 at Jackson Mortuary, 1125 E 13th

Ron Bowens, 75
Sep 8, 1950 — Aug 3, 2026
Service was held Aug. 22 at Jackson Mortuary.

SNAP, from Page **5** ↓

Appleseed now says more than **14,000 children** have lost benefits since July 2025.

Advocates point to increased paperwork and administrative problems. Families have reported delayed benefits, difficulty completing recertifications and benefits ending unexpectedly.

"The paperwork requirements appear to be overwhelming not only for our neighbors who are struggling to feed their families, but DCF as well," said Haley Kottler, senior campaign director for Kansas Appleseed.

Advocates are urging DCF to address processing delays and improve notification so eligible Kansans don't lose assistance because of administrative problems.

That leaves an important question: **How many of the 32,000 Kansans who have left SNAP actually became ineligible — and how many remain eligible but lost benefits because they didn't understand the new requirements or got caught in administrative red tape?**

ANTHONY E. WELCH
A HEAVENLY BIRTHDAY IN MEMORIAM

Forever missed, forever loved,
You walk with angels up above.
Your memory is our greatest treasure,
Loved in life beyond all measure.
Your smile, your warmth, your guiding light,
Shine on us always, day and night.

AUG. 31, 1953 - MARCH 17, 2013
HONORING HIS MEMORY AND MARKING
WHAT WOULD HAVE BEEN HIS 73RD BIRTHDAY
FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS

BEEF, from Page **4** ↓

Why Aren't Other Meat Prices Rising as Fast?

If drought and higher feed costs affect agriculture generally, why aren't chicken and pork prices rising as quickly?

The answer largely comes down to **biology and how the animals are raised.**

A sow can produce two litters and roughly 20 or more pigs a year, with hogs reaching market weight in about six months. Chickens reproduce even faster, and broiler chickens can reach market size in just **six to eight weeks.**

Hogs and chickens also don't depend on pasture. They're primarily raised indoors and fed corn, soybeans and other purchased feed. Drought can make that feed more expensive, but it doesn't eliminate the grass needed to support the animals.

Beef prices have been rising much faster than other meats. This comparison showed ground beef up 10% and steak 7% year-over-year, compared with increases of 2.7% for chicken and 4.3% for ham.

Sheep are more like cattle because they graze, but ewes commonly produce more than one lamb and lambs mature faster. Americans also eat relatively little lamb, and imports supply a significant share.

The difference shows up at the grocery store. In June, beef prices were 11.8% higher than a year earlier, compared with **2.4% for pork,** while poultry prices were essentially unchanged.

So What's the Solution?

There isn't one — and there certainly isn't a quick one.

Ranchers need to retain more young females for breeding and gradually rebuild the herd. Better rainfall would restore pasture and reduce reliance on expensive hay. Water conservation could help preserve the Great Plains' ability to produce cattle and feed crops. Continued improvements in genetics and nutrition can produce more beef from each animal, while imports can supplement domestic supplies.

But rebuilding creates a short-term catch: **every heifer kept for breeding is one less animal headed toward the beef supply today.**

That's why economists warn beef production could remain tight through 2027 and possibly into 2028.

The beef shortage took years to develop. Between the biology of cattle, the economics of ranching and growing pressure on the land and water needed to raise them, it will take years to fix.

INVESTORS, from Page **6** ↓

landlord's permission.

Most importantly, mortgage payments can build equity.

Federal Reserve data show the enormous wealth difference between owners and renters. In 2022, the median net worth of homeowners was about $396,000, compared with just $10,400 for renters and other non-homeowners. Homeownership alone doesn't explain that entire difference, but housing equity is an important component of household wealth.

The opportunity is particularly important for moderate-income families. A modest starter home may be the first major asset a family owns and eventually something that can be passed to children.

Rental houses remain an important part of a healthy housing market, and not everyone wants or is ready to own.

The concern is what happens when investors increasingly compete for the same affordable houses that offer working families their best opportunity to become homeowners.

A house purchased by an investor can generate rental income and growing equity for that investor for decades. That same house purchased by a family can provide stable housing while allowing the family to build equity of its own.

The concern isn't simply that investors are buying houses. It's that too many of the houses they're buying are the affordable ones families still have a chance to own.

LANDLORD, from Page **7** ↓

The lawsuit says Kansas City's Healthy Homes program had identified electrical violations, water damage and suspected mold at the property before Lee moved in.

Quick to Collect, Slow to Repair?

The lawsuit points to a striking contrast between FirstKey's enforcement of tenant obligations and the families' allegations about repairs.

FirstKey-related companies have filed **more than 1,000 landlord-tenant cases seeking back rent or eviction** in the Kansas City area since 2011, according to the lawsuit.

The plaintiffs say that included 517 Jackson County landlord-tenant actions in 2024, about 450 in 2025 and approximately 147 so far in 2026. The Community Voice has not independently verified those figures.

Meanwhile, the three families say they sometimes waited months or years for serious problems to be permanently corrected.

The lawsuit also cites more than 1,400 Better Business Bureau complaints against FirstKey during a three-year period. Those complaints are national, not limited to Kansas City, and include complaints about maintenance, water intrusion, mold, plumbing, heating, electrical problems, fees and security deposits.

The families are suing FirstKey, FirstKey Homes of Missouri, private-equity firm Cerberus Capital Management and several affiliated property-owning companies. Their claims include alleged violations of the Missouri Merchandising Practices Act and the state's implied warranty of habitability.

"No family should have to accept unsafe housing simply because they cannot afford to move," said Amy Sweeny Davis, an attorney representing the families.

The lawsuit is one case involving one corporate landlord. But as investors acquire more single-family homes and convert them to rentals, it highlights another part of the debate over investor-owned housing: **Buying the house is only the beginning. How those homes — and the families living in them — are treated after the purchase matters, too.**

Sigma Gamma Rho Honors Jackson Mortuary's Century of Service

By Bonita Gooch
Editor-in-Chief

As Jackson Mortuary celebrates its 100th anniversary this summer, members of Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Inc. took time to recognize not only the historic Wichita business, but also the family and staff who have carried its tradition of service forward.

Members of Sigma Gamma Rho, its Gamma Chi Sigma Chapter and Philo Affiliates gathered Aug. 2 with members of the Jackson family and Jackson Mortuary staff at Wichita State Connect for an intimate celebration honoring the mortuary's century of service.

Members of Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Inc. and its Philo Affiliates gather with members of the Jackson family and Jackson Mortuary staff during an Aug. 2 celebration recognizing the mortuary's 100 years of service to Wichita.

Founded in 1926, Jackson Mortuary is Wichita's longest-standing Black-owned businesses. For five generations, the family-operated mortuary has served Wichita families, helping generations navigate some of life's most difficult moments while building a legacy rooted in compassion, professionalism and community service.

The sorority's celebration offered a chance to recognize the people behind that legacy.

Gamma Chi Sigma President Schaunta James-Boyd welcomed the Jackson family and staff to the event, which included a dinner provided by Sigma Gamma Rho. Organizers said they wanted to give employees and family members an opportunity to step away from their daily responsibilities and simply enjoy being celebrated.

During the afternoon, guests shared stories, memories and laughter as they reflected on Jackson Mortuary's impact on generations of Wichita families.

"For Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, celebrating Jackson Mortuary was a way to say thank you and recognize an institution whose 100 years of service have made a lasting impact throughout the community," James-Boyd said.

The sorority also presented the Jackson family with a keepsake canvas recognizing five generations of family leadership.

Reaching the century mark is particularly significant for a Black-owned family business. Jackson Mortuary opened in 1926, during an era when segregation and discrimination severely limited opportunities for Black entrepreneurs. A century later, the business remains family operated and an important part of Wichita's Black history.

For Sigma Gamma Rho and its Philo Affiliates, the gathering was a chance to thank the Jackson family and staff for that century of service — and celebrate a legacy that continues.