

THE VOICE

A Trusted Voice From The Community's Perspective



Denise Colborn's Royal Impact
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A Community Dream Closes
What led to WeDevelopment Credit
Union's sudden shutdown? **Page 4**



Volume 33, No. 20 · communityvoiceks.com · Friday, October 23, 2026

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P.O. Box 20804
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THE VOICE

VOLUME 33, NUMBER 20
FRIDAY, OCTOBER 23, 2026

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Kansas Can Join the Blue Wave—Here's What it Will Take

We did in August for the Supreme Court amendment, We did in 2022 for the abortion amendment. Can that coalition deliver again in November?

By Bonita Gooch
Editor-in-Chief

Kansas could be part of a blue wave that is expected to spread across America this November. But just wishing for the Blue Wave to stop here won't make it happen. Democratic voters have to show up—and so do the unaffiliated voters and moderate Republicans who want a different direction in Topeka and Washington.

Kansas's political future is less settled than its reputation as a reliably red state suggests. Look at the numbers.

Heading into the November 2024 election, Democrats and unaffiliated voters together made up nearly 54% of Kansas's registered voters. Republicans accounted for less than 45%. That doesn't make every unaffiliated voter a Democrat, but it does mean Republicans can't single handedly dominate any Kansas election.

Participation has shown that to be true and Kansans have already shown what happens when Democrats and Unaffiliated voters show up in big numbers.

In August 2022, Kansans shocked the country when we rejected a constitutional amendment that would have removed state constitutional protection for abortion rights. Nearly 60% voted no.

Just this August, voters again rejected a

Republican-backed constitutional amendment, this time a proposal to replace the Kansas Supreme Court's appointment system with elections. Voters turned it down by a wide margin.

According to the secretary of state, 650,383 Kansans participated in the August primary—the second-highest number in state primary history. Only the 2022 primary drew more voters.

Now we need to bring that same determination to November.

Kansas has an opportunity to elect Adam Hamilton as its first Democratic U.S. senator since 1932. We can return Sharice Davids to Congress and elect more Democrats to serve alongside her: Lauren Reinhold in District 1, Don Coover in District 2 and Katy Tyndell in District 4.

These are opportunities, not guarantees. A blue wave will reach Kansas only if enough Kansans vote to make it happen.

The same is true in Topeka.

Kansas voters have elected Democratic governors before. This November, we can elect Cindy Holscher and running mate KC Ohaebosim to continue that tradition. But electing a governor is only part of the job.

We also need a Legislature that provides meaningful checks and balances. A governor's veto offers little protection when a legislative

supermajority can routinely override it. Electing more Democrats to the Kansas House would help ensure that the governor's objections carry weight.

And we need to pay attention to every statewide office.

We should expect a secretary of state who protects access to voting, an insurance commissioner who advocates for affordable coverage, an attorney general who puts sound judgment ahead of political ambition, and a treasurer who safeguards public money while helping Kansans build financial security.

Presidential elections command our attention. The past two years have reminded us how much presidential power matters. But

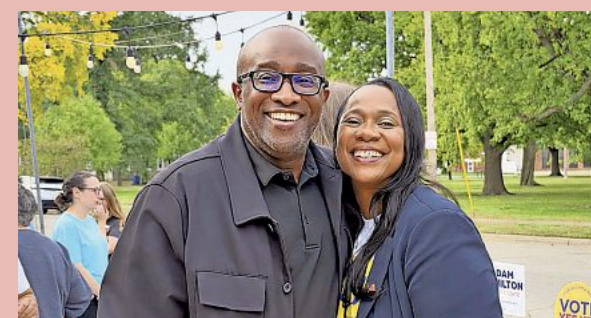
decisions about health care, public schools, reproductive rights, taxes and voting access also run through our state government.

We cannot afford to show up for one election and sit out the next.

Democrats, unaffiliated voters and Republicans dissatisfied with the direction of their party do not have to agree on everything to agree that Kansas needs balance, accountability and leaders who listen.

We can do it this November 3. BUT, WE CAN ONLY DO IT IF WE SHOW UP AND VOTE IN BIG NUMBERS.

See you at the polls—and take momma and them with you..P.S. Vote NO on the constitutional amendment.



ON THE COVER: Kansas lieutenant governor candidate KC Ohaebosim and Kansas Democratic Party Chair Jeanna Repass are working to turn hopes of a Kansas "blue wave" into Election Day victories. Repass has led the party's push, while Ohaebosim could make history as the first African American elected to statewide office in Kansas.

THE COMMUNITY VOICE
PO Box 20804 | Wichita, KS 67214
316.681.1155 | ISSN 1090-3852
www.communityvoiceks.com

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SUBSCRIPTIONS: Published BiWeekly
\$35.95/yr. Sedgwick County
\$48.95/yr. Outside Sedgwick County
\$73.99/yr. Outside Kansas

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Chemicals called **TCE** and **PCE** have been found in contaminated groundwater in parts of Sedgwick County, including the area commonly known as **29th & Grove** in Wichita.

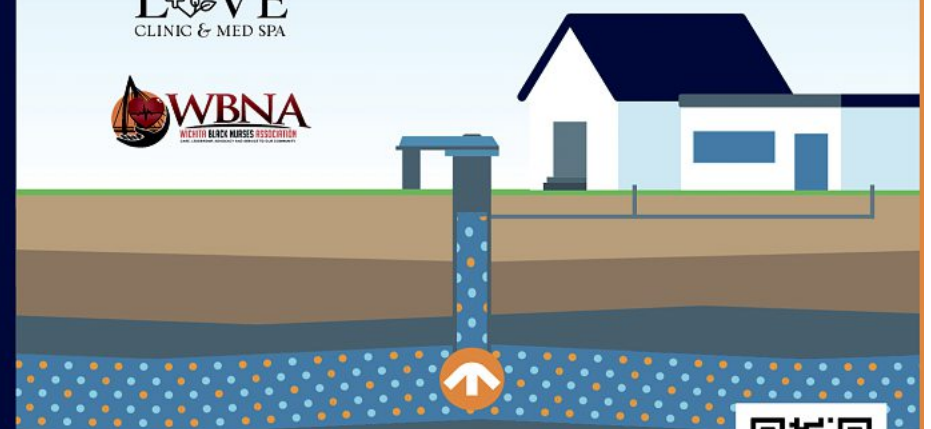
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Thirteen Years to Build, Less Than Four to Lose: WeDevelopment Merges After Financial Trouble

Federal regulators took control of the East Side credit union before arranging its merger into CommunityAmerica.

By Bonita Gooch
Editor, In Chief

It took 13 years for Kansas City organizers to turn their vision of a community-owned credit union into reality. Less than four years after opening, WeDevelopment Federal Credit Union has lost its independence.

The institution created to help East Side residents build wealth and escape predatory lending merged into CommunityAmerica Federal Credit Union on Sept. 1, following a federal takeover and mounting financial losses.

The National Credit

Union Administration took control July 10, citing “unsafe and unsound practices.” Regulators have not publicly detailed those practices, but financial reports show losses had exhausted the institution’s capital cushion.

For the residents, organizers and donors who spent years bringing WeDevelopment to life, the merger ends a much longer struggle than its brief operating history suggests.

A community’s long investment

The effort began in 2009, when then-Mayor Mark Funkhouser commissioned

a task force to identify ways to improve economically distressed areas. Task force chair Ajamu Webster and other participants pursued a recommendation to establish a community development credit union.

The goal was to provide affordable financial services in neighborhoods where payday lenders and check-cashing businesses filled gaps left by traditional banks.

After years of fundraising, planning and regulatory work, WeDevelopment received its federal charter in July 2022.

“Did I say this was a long process, a very, very long



Community supporters celebrate WeDevelopment Federal Credit Union's ribbon cutting on Oct. 22, 2022, at 3123 Prospect Ave. in Kansas City. The milestone followed 13 years of organizing and fundraising. Less than four years later, financial losses and a federal takeover led to its merger into CommunityAmerica.

process,” Webster joked at its October 2022 ribbon cutting.

The celebration reflected support from institutional donors as well as residents who contributed \$10 or \$20. Webster described the effort as a

citywide project.

The credit union began serving customers around the turn of 2023 at 3123 Prospect Ave., with about \$1.4 million in assets reported at the end of 2022.

See **MERGER** Page 14 →

Thirteen Years of Determination, a Painful Loss

For Ajamu Webster, WeDevelopment was more than a credit union. It was a vision he refused to abandon.

The idea grew from a task force convened by former Mayor Mark Funkhouser to improve economic conditions in struggling Kansas City neighborhoods. Webster helped turn that recommendation into a mission—and stayed with it through 13 years of fundraising, paperwork and setbacks. When progress stalled, he kept pushing. His determination helped carry the credit union from an idea to an approved charter in 2022.

He retired and moved to Ghana shortly afterward, but his hopes for its success never faded. Now, its loss is deeply personal.

“We did our best, and we accept that our best wasn’t good enough. We are grateful for the opportunity to bring the vision of an African American community-owned financial institution to life. We will forever appreciate the support received from organizations, institutions, churches, business owners, and community leaders. And most importantly, we are grateful for support from our credit union members and staff.”



Ajama Webster

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COMBAT Tax Renewal Funds More Than Police and Prosecutors

Jackson County voters will decide Nov. 3 whether to continue a tax supporting law enforcement, addiction treatment and community violence prevention.

By Bonita Gooch
Editor-in-Chief

A sister testifying about the loss of her younger sister to homicide. A mother celebrating Drug Court graduation and reconnecting with her children after years of addiction. A young man choosing opportunity over crime.

Jackson County Prosecutor Melesa Johnson points to these moments as examples of what the people and programs supported by COMBAT funding make possible.

The county's anti-crime sales tax reaches beyond police investigations and jail cells, supporting efforts to prevent violence, help victims and give people a path to recovery.

On Nov. 3, Jackson County voters will decide whether to continue the quarter-cent tax for another 10 years. Question 1 would maintain the existing rate: 25 cents on a \$100 taxable purchase. Without renewal, the tax expires March 31, 2027.

COMBAT stands for Community Backed Anti-Crime Tax. Its approach recognizes that responding to crime also requires preventing violence and helping people recover from addiction.

Born during the crack crisis

Voters first approved the tax in November 1989, during the crack cocaine epidemic. County legislators had declared a "violent health epidemic" involving drug abuse and drug-related crime.

According to COMBAT's history, Jackson County became the first jurisdiction in the nation to approve a dedicated tax confronting that crisis through enforcement, prevention and treatment.

Those social-service components were part of the original design. In 2009, voters expanded its mission to address violent crime whether or not drugs were involved.

Where the money goes

The tax generated \$33.9 million in 2025 and averaged \$31.3 million annually from 2021 through 2025, according to COMBAT's latest impact report. More than 60% of revenue over those five years was allocated to the justice system.

That support includes Family Court services and Treatment Court, formerly Drug Court, which offers eligible nonviolent offenders closely supervised addiction treatment as an alternative to incarceration.



COMBAT also supports pretrial supervision outside jail and Kansas City police crime analysts and laboratory technicians.

The Jackson County Drug Task Force works across city boundaries to investigate drug trafficking and disrupt the networks supplying illegal drugs to local communities. COMBAT provides more than 90% of its operating funding.

The report's 2025 community-program allocations included approximately \$5.35 million for 66 prevention programs, \$4.96 million for 23 treatment programs, \$1.29 million for eight school-based law enforcement initiatives and \$1.96 million for eight STRiVIN' programs.

Prevention funding supports organizations including Ad Hoc Group Against Crime, ArtsTech, High Aspirations, KC Mothers in Charge, Ivanhoe Neighborhood Council and WeCode KC. Their programs offer victim support, mentoring, safe activities and opportunities that help reduce the risk of violence and substance abuse.

Treatment funding supports programs at organizations including Swope Health's Imani House, Benilde Hall, Healing House and ReDiscover, helping people address substance use disorders and work toward recovery.

School-based grants must expand beyond the typical Drug Abuse Resistance Education, or DARE, curriculum, offering additional prevention education and skills for handling challenges as students grow.

STRiVIN': Connecting people with help

STRiVIN'—Striving Together to Reduce Violence in Neighborhoods—is the part of COMBAT that coordinates help for people facing multiple problems.

For example, a family might need housing assistance, counseling for a teenager and addiction treatment for a parent. A designated community organization, called a "hub," assesses those needs and connects the family with appropriate providers.

The effort began in 2015, using crime data to identify neighborhoods needing additional resources. Its online referral system started in Raytown in 2021 and now



Thon received addiction treatment through Benilde Hall with support from Jackson County's COMBAT sales tax. First approved in 1989, the tax was the nation's first dedicated to combining drug enforcement with prevention and treatment. In 2009, voters expanded its mission to include violence prevention beyond drug-related crime. On Nov. 3, voters will decide whether to renew the existing quarter-cent tax for another 10 years. PHOTO COURTESY OF JACKSON COUNTY COMBAT.

operates across all five hub areas. **Anyone can make a referral—including residents seeking help for themselves.** When referring another person, get their consent first.

The hubs serve these areas:

- **Northeast Kansas City:** Mattie Rhodes Center.
- **Midtown Kansas City:** Greater Impact.
- **Independence:** Community Services League.
- **Raytown:** Sisters in Christ.
- **South Kansas City/Hickman Mills:** Bridge Leadership Academy, identified in the 2025 report as the hub agency.

COMBAT recorded 5,338 referrals through 2025, including referrals for shooting survivors and families of homicide victims. Residents can start at jacksoncounty-combat.com/referrals or call **816-881-1400** for guidance, including which organization serves their address.

Does prevention work?

A recent Council on Criminal Justice assessment found that 91% of participating researchers considered expanded community violence intervention a likely contributor to the national decline in killings.

These efforts work directly with people at greatest risk, helping resolve conflicts and connecting them with support before violence occurs. But results vary by program, and the researchers' judgments do not prove that one approach caused the decline—or establish COMBAT's particular effect.

The underlying idea is straightforward: enforce the law while also addressing problems that contribute to violence and addiction.

A **yes vote** continues the existing tax for 10 years. A **no vote** allows it to expire in March 2027.

Wichita’s \$615 Million School Bond

Two Votes, Different Tax Impacts

By Voice News Service

Less than two years after narrowly rejecting a \$450 million school bond, Wichita school district voters are being asked to approve a larger package — and what would be the district’s first successful bond issue since 2008.

The Nov. 3 ballot divides the request into two questions. The first request to fund: \$407.1 million in improvement that would not raise the current tax rate, but would pick up at the same rate for the 2008 bond tax levy that will expire in 2008. The second question will fund \$207.9 million in improvements and would raise the current tax levy by \$50 per year on a \$200,000 house. The total package is for \$615 million in borrowing, \$165 million more than voters rejected in February 2025.

That earlier proposal failed by just 319 votes: 14,208 against and 13,889 in favor. That bond plan also proposed continuing the existing bond tax rate rather than raising it.

This time, voters can approve the smaller package alone or both questions. Under the board’s resolution, Question 2 cannot take effect unless Question 1 also passes.

What the First Question Buys

Question 1 would finance four replacement schools: Truesdell Middle and Black, McLean and Chisholm Trail elementary schools. Chisholm Trail would become a K–8 school, and Cessna Elementary would gain a middle school wing.

It also includes a new FutureReady Center for Trades on the East High campus, \$20 million each for preservation

at East and North high schools, and heating and cooling improvements in physical education and other learning spaces at 11 middle schools, five high schools and one FutureReady Center.

Traffic improvements would target Christa McAuliffe K–8, Isely K–8 and Seltzer Elementary. Plans include moving vehicles — particularly for students drop off and pick up — onto district property and separating pedestrians from traffic. The East High trades-center project would also address traffic at that campus.

The trades center would offer training in carpentry, heating and cooling, electrical work and plumbing, with opportunities to earn credentials and certifications.

The \$407.1 million request would replace payments on retiring 2008 bond debt with payments on new debt, for a net zero increase in the tax mill levy rate.

That means “no rate increase” tied to the bond. Without a new bond, the district says property taxes would decrease beginning with the 2028 tax bill — approximately \$125 annually for a \$200,000 home. However the no rate increase does not mean taxes paid won’t increase. The amount in taxes paid will likely increase based on increases in appraised values as well as non-bond related mill levy increases approved by the school board for operating expenses.

What the Second Question Buys

Question 2 includes replacement buildings for Coleman Middle and Adams Elementary, along with preservation work and

USD 259 2026 PROPOSED BOND PROJECT	
Question 1	
Project Name	Cost
(A) Build New FutureReady Center for Trades at East High (Central)	\$28.2M
(B) Rebuild Truesdell Middle School (Southwest)	\$103.9M
(C) Rebuild Black Elementary School (Central Northwest)	\$44.2M
(D) Rebuild McLean Elementary School (Central Northwest)	\$44.2M
(E) Rebuild Chisholm Trail Elementary, add middle school to make it a K–8 School (Park City)	\$81.3M
(F) Add middle school wing to Cessna Elementary to make it a K-8 School (Southwest)	\$45.3M
(G) North High School Preservation	\$20M
(H) East High School Preservation	\$20M
(J) Improve Traffic Flow at Select Schools	\$5M
(K) HVAC in PE & Other Learning Spaces (11 middle schools, 5 high schools and 1 FutureReady Center)	\$15M
Total Cost for Question 1	\$407.1M

Question 2	
Project Name	Cost
(I) Preservation at four 50-70 year old High Schools	\$4M
(L) Renovate Hadley (Central west) for Horace Mann & Move Irving (Central Northwest) to Horace Mann	\$11M
(M) Renovate OK Elem. into Early Childhood Center	\$9M
(N) Improve Career & Technical Education spaces at South High School	\$8.4M
(O) Improve Career & Technical Education spaces at Northwest High School	\$7M
(P) Improve Career & Technical Education spaces and parking at West High School	\$9.2M
(Q) Improve Career & Technical Education spaces and update secondary auditorium at Heights High School (North)	\$11.3M
(R) Rebuild Coleman Middle School, (Central East) renovate current building to consolidate alternative programs (Chester Lewis, EIA and Gateway)	\$106M
(S) Rebuild Adams Elementary School	\$42M
Total Cost for Question 2	\$207.9M

career-training improvements at West, Heights, South and Northwest high schools.

Previous bond issues included classroom, athletic and other improvements as well as air-conditioning work for these high schools, but these large aging facilities — between 50 and 70 years old — need proactive

preservation work that can help prevent future concerns. This includes things like roof repairs, brick restoration, foundation, drainage or grading work. - - between 50 and 70 years old.

The proposal sets aside \$4 million for preventative preservation across the four high schools, plus separate

allocations for career and technical education spaces and other improvements: ranging from \$7 million to \$11.3 million per school. These projects reflect the district’s FutureReady emphasis on preparing students for careers, including skilled occupations that do not necessarily require a four-year college degree.

Question 2 also would renovate the existing Coleman building to bring alternative programs together. Horace Mann would move into the former Hadley Middle School, and Irving would move into the vacated Horace Mann building. OK Elementary would be renovated into an early childhood center.

The replacement of Adams and Coleman are the only two proposed replacement schools in the bond issue. The only other east side projects in the bond issue are preservation, heating and cooling, or career-training improvements.

Does Northeast Wichita Win?

The last two successful bonds, \$284.5 million in 2000 and \$370 million in 2008, brought visible investments to northeast and near-by central Wichita.

The 2000 bond built Jackson Elementary, replaced Washington Elementary and built Stucky Middle. It also replaced Horace Mann and funded substantial additions at Park and L'Ouverture.

The 2008 bond funded replacement buildings for Mueller and Spaght, as well as the new Northeast Magnet campus in Bel Aire. Isely also relocated to Bel Aire.

The community also suffered a net loss from the Mueller/Isely shift, alongside the loss or relocation

of Northeast Magnet from the old Matthewson School building, which then housed Chester Lewis, which was vacated and torn down this year due to structural problems.

The Northeast community can also expect the closure of L'Ouverture at the end of this school year, regardless of the bond outcome. Other district schools planned for closing are Pleasant Valley Elementary at the end of the 2026-27 school year. Both Woodland and OK would close at the same time if the bond fails; but passage would delay their closures until after 2028-29.

While previous bond issues offered a lot more for Northeast Wichita, this bond proposal doesn't but that could be because so much was included in the past two bond issues for the area. That could be seen as a reason not to support the bond issue, or it could be seen as a reason to support other areas who supported improvements in our area, when there wasn't as much for them.

Understanding the Scores

The Vote No group's slogan, "Improve Learning First," highlights concerns about academic performance, particularly in northeast Wichita schools. Most chart rows show students scoring proficient or advanced—Levels 3 and 4. Level 1 indicates limited performance; Level 2 indicates basic knowledge and skills. Scoring at Level 2 does not mean a student cannot read or do math; it means the student has not reached the state's proficiency threshold. Spaght's second row includes Level 2 students. While the 2024 district figures show significant improvement, it cannot be credited entirely to improved student performance, because the state changed the assessments and the scores needed to reach each performance level in 2025.

Student Performance on 2025-26 State Assessment Test		
DISTRICT OR SCHOOL	READING/ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS	MATH
Kansas Statewide	45.9%	41.0%
Wichita USD 259	30.1%	21.0%
Gordon Parks Academy	28.3%	28.7%
Spaght Elemenatry (3-4)	16.1%	8.1%
Spaght Elementary (2-4)	38.8%	35.1%
USD 259 (2024)	20.0%	15.5%

Source: KSDEbPerformance Level Reports, selecting 2025-2026, All Students, All Grades and adding Levels 3 and 4. Figures rounded to one decimal place

What Homeowners Would Pay

Approving Question 2 would add approximately \$25 a year on the tax bill for a home with

an assessed valuation of \$100,000 or \$2.08 monthly. For a \$200,000 home, the increase would be approximately \$50 annually, or \$4.16 monthly.

Over the proposed 20-year repayment period, those additional amounts would total approximately \$500 and \$1,000, respectively, assuming unchanged property

values and tax rates. These figures represent the added cost of Question 2, not the entire bond tax bill.

See SCORES Page 14 →

Vote No

IMPROVE LEARNING FIRST

Opponents of Wichita's \$615 million school bond package say academic performance and accountability should take priority over more construction.

Their slogan, "Improve Learning First," reflects concerns that previous building investments have not produced adequate classroom results, particularly in northeast Wichita community schools.

"You have to improve learning, and you can't do that by building new buildings," said bond opponent Walt Chappell during an October press conference.

Opponents point to low proficiency rates at newer

schools as evidence that facilities alone cannot solve educational challenges. They argue the district should emphasize instruction, classroom discipline and better financial management.

The group also questions closing schools that received previous improvements and committing taxpayers to another 20 years of bond payments. Question 1 would continue a tax levy that would otherwise end; Question 2 would increase it.

"If we're going to spend that kind of money, we want results," Chappell said.

Vote Yes

INVEST IN LEARNING & CAREER PREPARATION

Supporters say Wichita students need safe, functional buildings alongside stronger classroom instruction.

"If we don't get the bond, then it would delay some of those things that are needed in the schools," said school board member Sheila Kinnard.

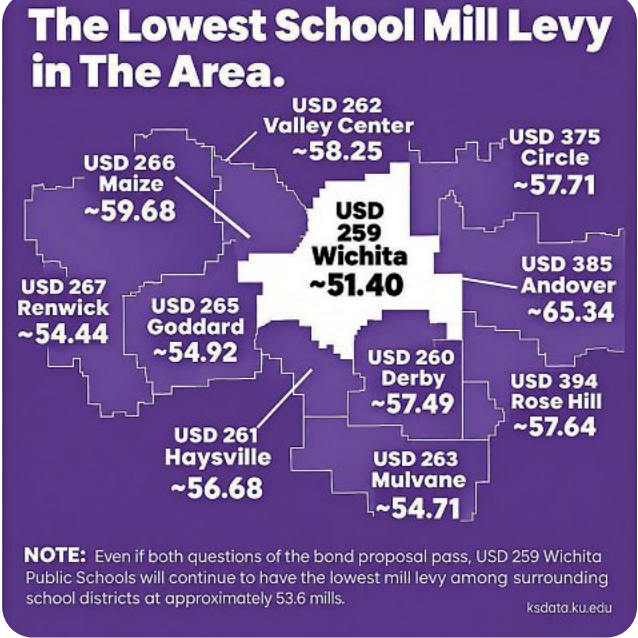
In response to the Vote No call to focus on academics first, the Vote Yes supporters cite research covering roughly 14,000 bond elections across 29 states. Researchers found school facility investments improved test scores on average, with gains developing over several years.

Beyond replacement buildings and repairs, the package

would expand career and technical education through a new trades center and improvements at four high schools. The center would serve students districtwide.

Those investments support the district's FutureReady approach: helping students graduate with skills and credentials for well-paying careers, recognizing that not everyone will attend a four-year college.

Supporters argue that improving achievement and facilities can happen together. Bond proceeds cannot pay teacher salaries, but they can address building problems that complicate teaching and learning.





SEDGWICK COUNTY, LET'S HELP TURN KANSAS BLUE!



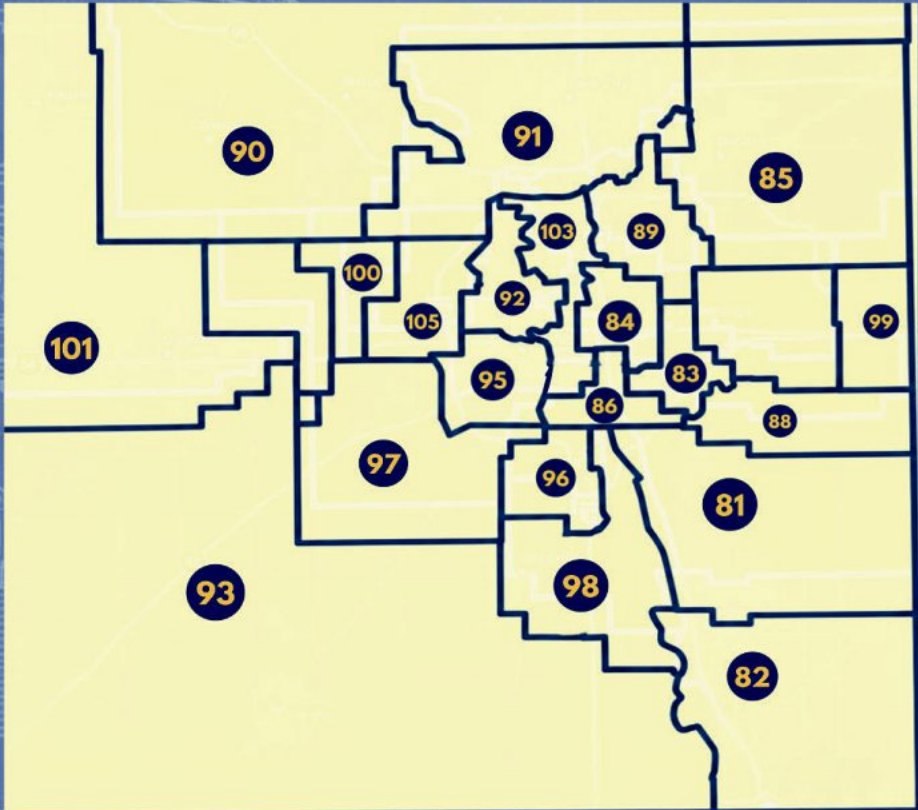
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 88 CANDACE LANDERS	 96 JESSICA MALDONADO	 105 JOHN BURKE

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JEANNA REPASS
Chair, Kansas Democratic Party



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44



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46



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57



KC OHAEBOSIM

LT.G



BONITA GOOCH

84



CANDACE LANDERS

88



CAROL BREWER

89



JESSICA MALDONADO

96



ANGELA MARTINEZ

103



JUAN C. LUENGO

TRE



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OUR TESTING EVENTS

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MARTINEZ FOR KANSAS

State Representative • District 103

AN EVERYDAY VOICE FOR **EVERYDAY PEOPLE**

Born and raised in Wichita and a lifelong resident of District 103, Angela doesn't need talking points to tell her what matters. As a wife, mother, grandmother, proud dog mom and president of a non profit community youth organization, she understands the challenges Kansas families face because she lives them every day.

- Proven Leadership
- Rooted in Community
- Working for Kansas

Every decision she makes is guided by one simple question:

Will this make life better for Kansas families?

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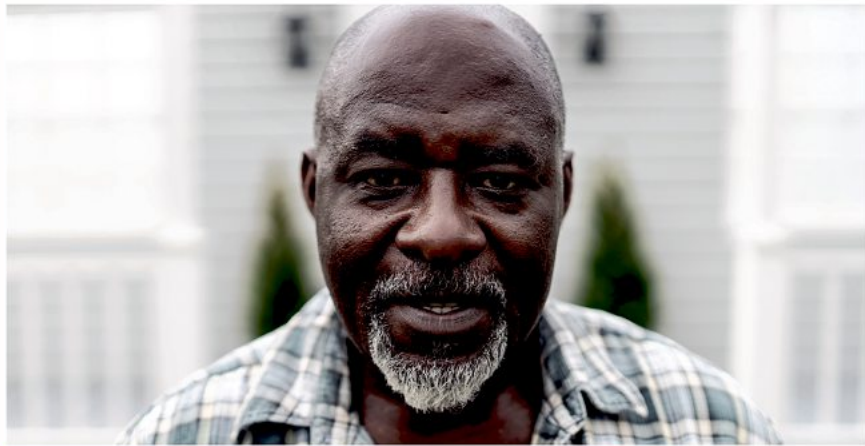
Paid for by Angela Martinez for KS House, Adriana Terrones, Treasurer

THE COMMUNITY VOICE OPPOSES KANSAS' CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT

Kansas already requires U.S. citizenship to vote. The Community Voice opposes rewriting the Constitution from "Every citizen" who qualifies may vote to "No person shall be deemed a qualified elector unless..." — language we believe could open the door to additional proof requirements and barriers to registration.

VOTE NO! on this amendment





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Join us to stand up for Social Security in the upcoming election.

Be a Social Security voter.
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Know What's at Stake Before You Vote

By Bonita Gooch
Editor-in-Chief

Candidates aren't the only important decisions on your November ballot. Constitutional amendments and local tax questions will also shape voting rights, health care, public services and how the government responds to the people it serves.

The Community Voice's applauded election explainers are designed to help you understand those choices before you reach the voting booth. We look beyond the ballot's sometimes confusing wording to explain what would change, why the proposal matters and what a yes or no vote would accomplish.

We deliberately write these articles so readers who haven't been following politics can understand the issues without needing a government textbook. For those already keeping up, our explainers provide information you can confidently share with family, friends and neighbors who may have questions.

Below is a quick summary of our articles on issues you'll find on your general



Demonstrators call for fair congressional maps outside the Missouri Capitol. From redistricting to voting rights and local taxes, The Community Voice's election explainers – available online – break down what's at stake and what a yes or no vote would mean.

election ballot. YOU may have read these articles in one of our print editions but like most of our print articles, you can readily find them on our website **CommunityVoiceKS.com**. If the brief summary we provide here isn't enough, just scan the QR code to get to our full and informative explainer.

Four More Missouri Ballot Questions Explained

Abortion isn't the only statewide issue Missouri voters will decide in November. Four additional questions address congressional boundaries, citizen-approved laws, state investments and elected sheriffs.

Our explainer breaks down each proposal, including Proposition A, which asks voters whether to approve the Republican-leaning congressional map that divides Kansas City among three districts. This proposal was at the center of the debacle that finally ended with the old maps being used in this election. Now, citizens finally get to cast this important vote.

Amendment 6 concerns limiting the ability of lawmakers to overturn measures passed through citizen initiatives. A prime example is the abortion-rights amendment voters approved in 2024 through the petition process, which lawmakers

are now asking voters to repeal. If Amendment 6 had been in place, the General Assembly would not have had enough votes to put that repeal on the ballot. Read our explainer to learn more about how the amendment would work.

Amendment 7 would create a state investment fund intended to grow over time, with the long-term goal of using its earnings to replace state taxes.

Amendment 8 would put provisions concerning elected sheriffs into the constitution and change the process for initiating their removal.

These proposals involve different parts of government, but each raises questions about public power, accountability or future spending.

We explain what the measures would actually change, distinguish existing requirements from proposed ones and spell out what a yes or no vote means—giving readers a useful starting point before making four consequential decisions.

Learn more about all of these amendments in our article online.

Scan the QR code to read the full explainer.

Kansas Already Limits Voting to Citizens. What Would the Amendment Change?

Kansas voters looking at the Nov. 3 constitutional amendment will first encounter a simple explanation:

"This amendment would clarify that only a person who is a citizen of the United States is eligible to vote in this state."

The ballot then tells voters that a yes vote would clarify that only a U.S. citizen is eligible to vote, while a no vote would make no change to the Kansas Constitution.

That sounds straightforward, but citizenship is already required to vote in Kansas, so what is the constitutional amendment really doing?

Our explainer examines the proposed rewrite of the Kansas Constitution, which appears further down on your ballot with strikeouts and added wording that make it confusing to understand. But we give you the actual wording change.

The constitutional rewrite changes the constitution's affirmative declaration that **"Every citizen of the United States"** who meets the requirements is eligible to vote to a negative formulation: **"No person shall be deemed a qualified elector**

unless" those requirements, including citizenship, are met.

It is that switch—from **"Every citizen"** to **"No person ... unless"**—that concerns voting-rights advocates.

In addition, as with the Supreme Court constitutional amendment on the primary ballot, the language makes a yes vote seem like something you shouldn't question, while understanding a no vote really requires looking at the issue.

Remember, in August, they wanted Kansans to vote yes to elect judges. Kansans saw through the disguise. We explain the disguise.

Scan the QR code to read the full explainer.

Wyandotte Voters Face Two Sales-Tax Questions

Two proposed sales taxes would fund different services—and they don't apply to exactly the same voters.

A countywide quarter-cent sales tax would support health and social services, potentially providing money for a permanent, year-round emergency homeless shelter. A

See VOTING Page 16 →

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17th Street Work Nears Completion: What Took So Long?

As the changes become visible, we explain the work behind months of barricades and detours.

By Ty Davis

The Community Voice

Since February, barricades along 17th Street between Grove and Interstate 135 have sent drivers out of their way and left residents wondering: What is taking place behind

the roadblocks, and when will the street reopen?

What some residents thought might be a brief undertaking has stretched into months of construction. They hadn't expected the amount of work involved and are wondering whether the results will be worth the

inconvenience.

The current closure is between Minnesota and Grove. Eastbound and westbound traffic is detoured to 13th Street using Mosley and Grove. Just west of Minnesota, 17th is open with one lane each way.

The project is the subject of our first **What Wichita Wants to Know** story, a series answering residents' questions about their community.

Residents asked us: **"What exactly are they doing that's taking so long?"**

What Exactly Are They Doing?

The project includes reconstruction of the road between Interstate 135 and Grove. The rebuilt section will have one through lane in each direction and a shared center lane for left turns, replacing the previous four-lane configuration. Plans also include on-street bicycle lanes, five-foot-wide sidewalks on both sides and drainage improvements along the street.

The construction bid for the current project came in at approximately \$4.9 million, nearly \$1 million above the engineer's estimate.

While we couldn't get a specific completion date for the current project, city officials expect work to be complete by the end of this year, weather permitting.

The changes continue improvements made in separate stretches along 17th over the years. The stretch from Hillside to Oliver was converted to a similar three-lane format in 2017. Beginning in late 2020, the stretch from I-135 to Broadway was rebuilt with a three-lane layout. That work was finished in 2022.



Barricades remain at 17th and Grove as reconstruction nears completion. The project includes new pavement, sidewalks, bicycle lanes and drainage improvements. City officials expect work to finish by year's end, weather permitting.

The Four-Lane to Three-Lane Model

Converting a four-lane street to three lanes is an approach being used more often in Wichita and across the country. It's commonly referred to as a "road diet."

The goal of the "diet" is to reduce crashes and make room for people walking and bicycling.

On a four-lane street without a center turn lane, a driver waiting to turn left can stop traffic in the inside lane. Drivers behind that vehicle must brake or change lanes. A center turn lane gives turning vehicles a place to wait outside through traffic.

One lane each way also reduces weaving and passing, while pedestrians have fewer through lanes to cross. Federal Highway Administration research found overall crash reductions of 19% to 47% after these conversions, although results vary by location.

The 17th Street conversion is also about connecting bicycle routes. A 2022

17th street, the inconvenience comes with something they had long pushed for: investment in their neighborhood streets.

Potholes and flooding along 17th Street were so bad that in summer 2007, neighborhood resident Bobby Thomas stood at 17th and Hillside for 10 days protesting the street's condition. His sign read: "Turn here to drive on an obstacle course."

It still took until July 2009 for construction to get underway on the \$3.4 million reconstruction of 17th Street between Grove and Hillside. It was completed in September 2010. That same stretch of lane is scheduled for the same 3-lane diet, which will complete the roadway transition from Oliver to Broadway. With the 2007 improvements which include sewer improvements that helped address seepage problems the city said helped lead to the pothole, the "diet" work in this area shouldn't be as extensive as the Grove to I-135 improvements. We'll let you know when that work is scheduled to begin.

city advisory board recommendation called for extending 17th Street's bicycle lanes from Hillside to the Canal Route, where they can connect with the bike path at I-135.

A Long Road to Improvements

For longtime residents who endured years of deteriorating pavement along

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November 3rd

If you have any issues voting early or in person, call the nonpartisan, Election Protection hotline at 866-OUR-VOTE.

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Curious about a new business, a neighborhood landmark, road construction or a piece of Wichita history? The Community Voice is finding answers to your questions about our community.

Submit your question at [insert link], or scan the QR code. Your question could inspire our next story.

Submit online @ communityvoiceks.com, click on more, then What Wichita Wants to Know.

Denise Colborn Builds Pageant Winners — and Confidence

The Wichita coach behind a national Miss Teen USA winner brings diversity, encouragement and a devoted volunteer team to the Miss ICT pageant.

Denise Colborn knows how to prepare a contestant to win a crown. She coached her daughter Hailee all the way to the title of Miss Teen USA, helped another client earn a national title this year and has seen two contestants from her Wichita pageant become Miss Kansas Teen USA.

But winning begins with something she wants every contestant to develop: confidence.

"I'm not training you just for a pageant," Colborn said. "I'm training you for life."

That philosophy guides Miss ICT, the local competition she founded in 2021, and her work as a pageant consultant preparing contestants for state and national stages. As a Black woman in the industry, she also works to expand diversity and help contestants of color succeed.

The sixth annual Miss ICT pageant, Nov. 7–8 at Wichita State University's Duerksen Fine Arts Center, will crown its 2027 Miss and Teen winners. Sixteen Miss contestants and 12 teens are competing.

Current titleholders are Kiara Whyte, Miss ICT 2026, and Breece Baxter, Miss ICT Teen. Dia Kearney, who originally won the ICT Teen crown, advanced to become Miss Kansas Teen USA.

Colborn's involvement began long before she became a director or coach. A Wichita South High graduate, she started competing in pageants around age 12. With

little family money for competitions, she approached businesses to raise support.

She didn't win, but the experience broadened her world and strengthened her self-esteem.

When her daughter, Hailey expressed interest in competing, she stepped in, coaching her all the way to the 2018 Miss Teen USA national title.

That experience helped lay the foundation for Colborn's consulting work. This year, another of her clients, Kansas City-area Aspen Dean, won the 2026 Miss Junior All American national title.

Colborn launched Miss ICT after Kansas' USA pageant director challenged her to organize a local competition. An independent program primarily feeding into the Miss USA system, it offers preparation and financial help for contestants advancing to the Kansas state competition. Miss USA's national winner goes on to Miss Universe.

Colborn says Miss ICT is Kansas' only local pageant offering this route into the USA system, with the Miss Kansas USA -- unlike the Miss Kansas America pageant -- not requiring competitors to advance to state via a local pageant.

For Colborn, creating a diverse, welcoming environment has been intentional, from recruiting contestants to selecting judges.

"Representation matters," she said.

She remembers the limited diversity Hailey encountered in her rise to a national title. Her own program emphasizes belonging and mutual encouragement.

"We are community. It's a sisterhood," she said. "They encourage one another. They support one another."

About 30 volunteers return year after year to produce the pageant and help with the training sessions leading



Miss ICT 2026 Kiara Whyte, left, pageant director and coach Denise Colborn, center, and newly crowned Miss Kansas Teen USA 2026 Dia Kearney celebrate at the state competition. Whyte finished fourth runner-up in Miss Kansas USA.



A workshop participant practices her walk as parents observe. Colborn's preparation sessions help participants develop poise, presentation skills and confidence.



Volunteer interview panelists help contestants practice answering questions before the Miss ICT pageant. The sessions give participants experience speaking about themselves, their goals and issues that matter to them.



Denise Colborn shares a hug with a young workshop participant. The pageant director and coach emphasizes encouragement and confidence alongside competition skills.

up to it. Everyone, including Colborn, volunteers. Money raised goes back into production, prizes and contestant support.

It's also a family affair. Colborn's husband is all in with the pageant. Among his many roles, and overall support for Denise, we found him recently serving as an panelists on a mock interview panel for contestants.

Denise Hightower, Nicole Zinn and Nolan Jones, who

also served as practice panelists, have been volunteers with the contest since its beginning. They say they've watched some of the contestants grow from teens into Miss competitors and the interviews reveal their growing confidence and concern for their communities.

"These are some great young ladies. Our contestants are concerned about the future of the world. It gives you hope," Hightower said.

In addition to the mock interviews, preparation includes workshops and optional walking sessions. For pageant winners, the program covers its Miss and Teen winners' state-pageant expenses and provides partial assistance to other top-five finishers.

New this year, an essay competition will award a \$1,000 Melanie McCray-Miller scholarship in each division, separately from the

pageant crowns.

McCray-Miller, a mentor to Colborn who died earlier this year, judged the first pageant and continued as a pageant volunteer supporting the judges' work afterward. Her family will present the awards.

For Colborn and her volunteers, those investments serve a shared purpose: helping contestants recognize their possibilities and carry that confidence beyond the stage.



Rau Construction Company is accepting bids for the renovation of the **Armour Boulevard Apartment Renovations** located at **900 & 900 E. Armour Blvd**

(Bainbridge Apartments), **914 & 918 E. Armour Blvd** (Armour Court Apartments), **3424 & 3426 Harrison** (Harrison Apartments), **1301 E Armour** (Linda Vista Apartments), and **400 E. Armour Blvd** (Georgian Court Apartments).

The scope of work includes exterior work, roofing, site improvements, storefront doors, concrete, and asphalt paving. Interior work will consist of minor framing, drywall, cabinetry, flooring, doors and hardware, miscellaneous specialties, and painting. Certified MBE/WBE firms are strongly encouraged to bid.

Firms will need to comply with OSHA 10hr training.

Questions can be directed to Rena Manixal rena@rauconstruction.com or at 913-642-6000.

Bids must be submitted to Rau Construction no later than Friday, November 6, 2026 at 10:00am.

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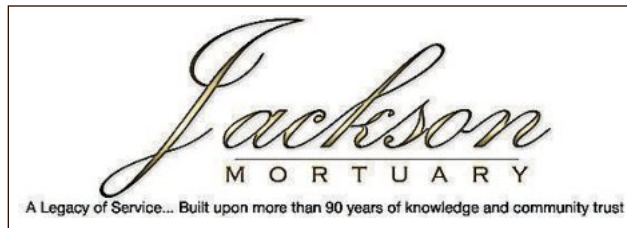
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William Craig Rice, 64

Aug 21, 1962 — Oct 15, 2026

Service will be held at 11 am on Fri. Nov. 6 at Calvary Baptist Church, 2653 N Hillside

Carmen R. Rogers, 79

Dec 21, 1946 — Oct 14, 2026

Service will be held at 10:00 am on Thur, Oct. 29 at Old Mission Cemetery, Old Mission Dr.

Stanley Dwayne Small, 64

Oct 27, 1961 — Oct 13, 2026

Service will be held at 2 pm on Fri. Oct. 30 at North Ash Church of the Nazarene, 1245 N. Ash,

Aaliyah Latona Wilson, 22

May 24, 2004 — Oct 7, 2026
Private Service will be held at Jackson Mortuary.

Mamie Jewel Jordan, 82

Jul 16, 1944 — Oct 7, 2026
Service will be held at 2 pm on Sat., Oct. 24 at University United Methodist Church, 2220 N. Yale.

Robert Freeman, Sr., 93

Jul 19, 1933 — Oct 4, 2026
Service was held Oct. 19 at Saint Mark United Methodist Church.

MERGER, from Page 4 ↓

Its services included checking and savings accounts, auto and personal loans, business financing and financial guidance.

Early promise, mounting losses

By summer 2023, leaders were celebrating their ability to help borrowers who struggled to obtain conventional financing.

"They're finding out that when other lenders are saying no, we say yes," then-CEO Gwen Washington told The Community Voice.

Among the businesses financed was Privée Restaurant + Lounge, according to restaurant staff who spoke with The Voice. The upscale Crossroads establishment opened in August 2023

and closed less than a year later, amid lawsuits and unpaid-bill claims.

The restaurant's quick failure raises questions about the wisdom of that first-year loan, although the credit union's loss on that loan, if any, remains unknown.

The broader financial picture was troubling.

Reporting based on regulatory filings shows WeDevelopment lost approximately \$331,000 in 2024, \$305,000 in 2025 and another \$255,000 during the first three months of 2026.

By March 2026, WeDevelopment had fallen into a negative net worth position. It had about \$2.63 million in assets — cash, investments, outstanding loans and other assets — but roughly \$2.82 million in deposits and other obligations

it must repay, a shortfall of approximately \$190,000.

For a credit union, the key benchmark is a financial cushion equal to at least 7% of its assets. Regulators call that "well capitalized." A ratio of 6% to less than 7% is "adequately capitalized." These are capital benchmarks, rather than a guarantee of overall financial health.

For comparison, credit unions nationwide had a combined net worth ratio of 11.31% at the end of 2025, comfortably above that 7% benchmark, according to NCUA.

Those figures reflect serious financial deterioration, but they do not make clear how much of the overall losses came from unpaid loans, operating expenses or other decisions.

Accounts protected, independence gone

After taking control, NCUA determined a merger was in members' best interests. WeDevelopment had 1,015 members and approximately \$2.4 million in assets when the merger was announced.

Member accounts remained federally insured, and services continued. CommunityAmerica says account conversions are taking place during October, with existing loan rates and terms preserved.

The merger protects continued access to financial services. But it also closes the chapter on an independent institution built through more than a decade of community effort.

The question now is how that long-awaited promise unraveled so quickly.

SCORES, from Page 11 ↓

However, what begins as a \$25 or \$50 increase this year could rise significantly as property values increase over the 20 year length of the bonds. The Federal Housing Finance Agency's Sedgwick County home-price index rose about 96% between 2006 — the year of the district's last bond issue. That is a market-price measure, not an average county appraisal, but it illustrates why a

fixed-value tax example cannot predict what an tax payer will pay over the length of the bond.

Why Bonds as Financing

According to the Vote Yes flyer, the state of Kansas discourages school districts from building large cash reserves, limiting their ability to save for major projects for the future, making bonds the primary mechanism for a district to fund major facility and infrastructure needs.

VOTE, from Page 11 ↓

separate three-eighths-cent tax would apply only within the city limits of Kansas City, Kansas, and would support parks, recreation and infrastructure. Proposed city projects for the three-eighths-cent tax include replacing Parkwood Pool, improving community centers and developing a public park in Piper.

We also examine the debate surrounding the countywide proposal. Supporters point

to unmet health and housing needs and note that visitors would help pay the tax. Critics raise concerns about the burden of the sales tax on lower-income households and the need for a clearer spending plan.

What could these taxes mean for your neighborhood—and your wallet? Scan the QR code for a closer look at the proposals before you vote.

Scan with camera

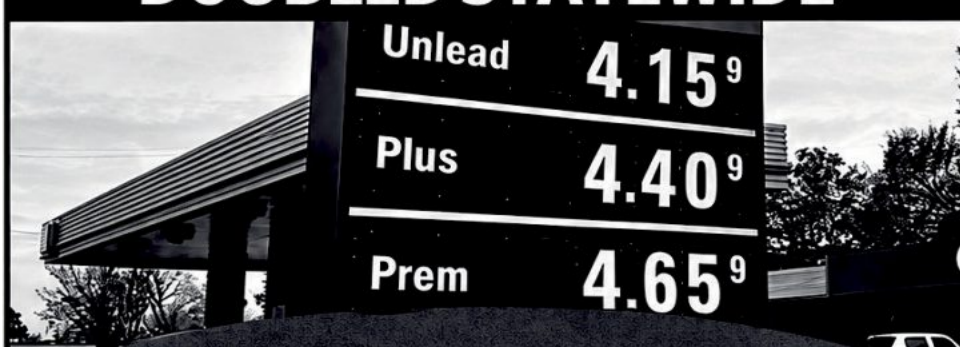




Since March of 2026,
**ROGER MARSHALL HAS VOTED AGAINST
 ENDING THE WAR IN IRAN
 14 TIMES**

Senator Marshall told Kansans the "Iran war [was] likely to end soon" and "gas prices will come down."
 Meanwhile,

**GAS AND DIESEL HAVE
 DOUBLED STATEWIDE**

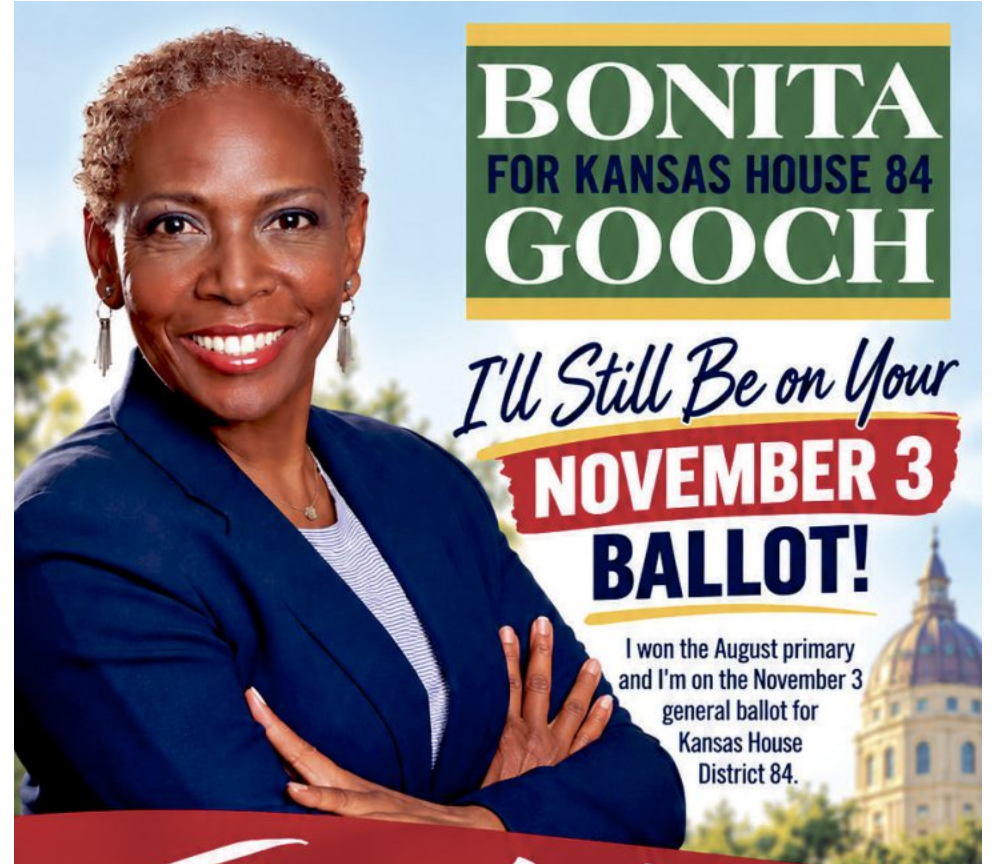


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Senator Marshall claims he 'hates war' but continues to vote to keep President Trump's war going
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SENATOR ROGER MARSHALL APPEARS AT A LESS WAR FOR SURE WAVE, 2026.



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Wichita students are the future of Wichita and deserve infrastructure that prepares them for the workforce. This bond helps keep schools strong, safe and future-ready for generations to come.

The surrounding school districts of Goddard, Maize, Valley Center, and Haysville have collectively passed twelve bond issues since the 2008 USD 259 bond issue was approved, 18 years ago.

Wichita Public Schools educates more students than those districts combined.

VOTE YES YES

ON NOVEMBER 3

MAKE A VOTING PLAN

Early voting sites are open October 19 – 30. Election Day polls are open 7:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m. Take the time now to find your polling site, learn more about your voting options and make your plan.

VoteYesYes2026.com | Paid for by Yes for Wichita Kids, Luis Rodriguez, Chair