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WE SHOWED UP!!

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We Showed Up!

Now What, Democrats? Don't Mess This Up.

By Bonita Gooch
Publisher, The Community Voice

The youngest woman on our cover had just turned 18 when she cast her first ballot. Three generations of Black women in one family showed up to vote. By the time she votes again, what will those of us who got elected be able to tell her we got done?

Call it a blue wave or a blue tsunami. I remember how sad I was after the beating Democrats took in 2024. Voters went from Trump to Biden in 2020, back to Trump in 2024, and two years later handed Congress to Democrats. They've shown how quickly they'll take their support elsewhere when they feel the people in office aren't helping them.

Americans are hurting! Too many Americans are sitting at their kitchen tables trying to stretch a dollar that's already stretched as far as it can go. The rent is up. So are groceries and health insurance. A property tax bill can leave someone on a fixed income wondering how much longer they can afford to stay in their home.

Democrats won the U.S. House and Senate. Their first order of business should be making life more affordable. Americans have watched years of politicians going after each other. Democrats, spend those first weeks getting bills to the floor that lower health insurance premiums and help build more housing people can afford. Tell families how much they could save and when. If President Trump vetoes a bill that would deliver relief, he can explain why. If Democrats hold it up, they owe voters an explanation, too.



Three generations of Black women in one family voted in the Nov. 3 midterm election. From left are grandmother, Janice Lewis, mother, Chandra Lewis and daughter, Ta'Lyiah , who had just turned 18 and cast her first ballot.

That responsibility extends to the states. According to the Democratic Legislative Campaign Committee, Democrats gained majorities in at least 12 state legislative chambers and broke at least 13 Republican supermajorities.

Here in Kansas, where I was elected to the House, we broke the Republican supermajority. Republicans will still control the incoming House, but they'll need votes from outside their party to override a governor's veto. If Cindy Holscher's lead holds, that gives Republican leaders more reason to work with us before bills reach her desk.

Kansas Democrats must get to work passing the agenda we ran on. We'll need Republican votes to pass it. I'm willing to compromise within reason, and I hope my Republican colleagues are willing to do the same.

With a presidential election ahead and candidates already positioning themselves, voters won't give us much time to lollygag. Two years goes fast. When that young woman on our cover goes back to vote, I want her to be able to name something that got better after she voted.

Democrats, we must deliver.

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Community news matters most when everyone can access it.

For more than 30 years, The Community Voice has kept readers informed, connected and represented—without charging them to pick up a newspaper. Our website, four weekly newsletters and online community calendar are free, too.

We believe useful, trustworthy information should be available regardless of someone's ability to afford another subscription. Understanding a ballot question, finding a health resource or learning what's happening in your neighborhood should be available to everyone.

That's why we've launched our annual year-end fundraising campaign with this year's theme, **Keep Our Voice Strong. Our goal is $40,000 by December 31—and we'd love to exceed it.**

Keeping THE VOICE free has helped us grow our print and digital reach, getting more information to more people. Our online content averages approximately **350,000 views monthly**. Those aren't 350,000 individual people; they include readers returning for reporting, resources and community stories they value.

We give them plenty to return for: elections, schools, health, housing, local businesses and community accomplishments across Wichita, the Kansas City metro and Kansas.

"Readers tell us they appreciate both the quantity and quality of our work," said Bonita Gooch, owner, publisher and editor-in-chief. "We don't want to give you less, but we need your support to keep delivering, and delivering for free."

"We like to remind people, THE VOICE is free to take—but not free to make," Gooch said.

Printing alone costs up to $36,000 annually. Our base website cost is $7,000 yearly—and that's before reporting, photography, editing, design and other expenses.

Reaching $40,000 would help us keep THE VOICE free for another year. Exceeding it would strengthen that work.

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Cozy Cottage's Homes and Care Earn State Recognition

By Bonita Gooch
Editor-in-Chief



The Cozy Cottage Senior Living team poses with Lacey Hunter of the Kansas Department for Aging and Disability Services (burgundy sweater), celebrating zero deficiencies found during the home's unannounced annual inspection. In the back row, from right, are CEO and co-owner Brittany Brown; her sister and business partner, LaKeisha Williams; and her brother, Ronald Gray III, who also works in the business.



A table set for four looks into the living room at a Cozy Cottage Senior Living home. The open floor plan connects two places where residents gather for meals and conversation.



A resident and a caregiver play a block-stacking game at a table overlooking the neighborhood at a Cozy Cottage Senior Living home.



A back patio gives residents a place to sit outdoors at one of Cozy Cottage Senior Living's four Wichita homes. A fifth home is being renovated and is expected to open soon.

At Cozy Cottage Senior Living, older adults receive around-the-clock care in a small, close-knit household, with home-cooked meals, community outings and familiar caregivers who learn their routines, preferences and needs.

During a recent visit, the Cozy Cottage, four-bedroom, Wichita home we visited, housed five residents. It's spacious, open kitchen and dining area, well-appointed facilities, accessible bathrooms and clean furnishings created a welcoming setting. A large living room was the obvious heart of this small residential community.

According to CEO and co-owner Brittany Brown, that comfortable setting is only part of the organization's commitment to care that this year has earned them deficiency-free annual inspections at three of the homes.

The latest inspection, in October, prompted an in-person visit and recognition from the Kansas Department for Aging and Disability Services. Lacey Hunter, KDADS' commissioner of survey, certification and credentialing, traveled from Topeka to acknowledge the achievement.

In a congratulatory letter read at the presentation, KDADS Secretary Laura Howard recognized "the hard work and effort it takes to achieve this level of compliance" and encouraged Cozy Cottage to continue serving as an example to other facilities.

The recognition reflects more than an attractive house. Inspectors arrive unannounced to examine resident care, records and compliance with state requirements. Maintaining those standards requires consistent staff training, documentation, safety practices and attention to residents' needs.

A zero-deficiency inspection means surveyors identified no violations during that review.

"It's a really, really wonderful thing, and we're really proud of providers like this," Hunter said.

Brown, a nurse practitioner, operates Cozy Cottage with her sister and business partner, LaKeisha Williams, who has a degree in healthcare administration. Their brother, Ronald Gray III, works in the business office while attending college.

Residents receive transportation to medical appointments. Activities range from enjoying sunny summer evenings on the patio to community outings, including a recent pumpkin-patch visit.

Each house has staff working three shifts, seven days a week. Brown said office and field staff provide additional support, visiting each home to check on residents, review paperwork, address concerns and ensure supplies are available. The team includes certified nursing assistants and certified medication aides.

For Brown, meeting state requirements is the starting point.

"Everyone deserves good care," she said.

Cozy Cottage operates under Kansas' Home Plus licensing category, which provides personal assistance and potentially supervised nursing care in a small residential setting.

The model is well established but still unfamiliar to many families. Kansas listed 32 licensed Home Plus facilities in December 1997; KDADS' current directory lists 262.

Home Plus facilities typically operate in existing houses refurbished and adapted for residents' care and accessibility needs. The model offers a familiar neighborhood setting, with shared living spaces and a small household of residents.

This year, Kansas increased the maximum capacity for Home Plus facilities from 12 to 16 residents, although individual homes may have lower licensed capacities.

Hunter said adapting existing homes allows experienced caregivers to establish businesses without the substantial startup investment required to build a larger care facility.

Affordability

For families, affordability depends on the home's rates and the resident's resources.

CareScout's 2025 survey puts Kansas' median assisted-living cost at $5,975 monthly, compared with $8,669 for a semiprivate nursing-home room. These are statewide benchmarks, not Cozy Cottage's prices or a separate Home Plus average.

Cozy Cottage accepts Medicaid and private payment, Brown said. Medicare generally does not cover ongoing assisted-living custodial care. KanCare, Kansas' Medicaid program, may cover approved care services for eligible residents, but residents remain responsible for housing and food costs.

Brown recommends considering long-term-care insurance and planning while healthy.

See **Cozy Cottage** Page **15** →

Beyond Medicare's $0 Premium: What Could You Owe?

Even with Medicare, out-of-pocket expenses can add up quickly. Before open enrollment ends Dec. 7, review whether your coverage—and your budget—can handle a major illness.

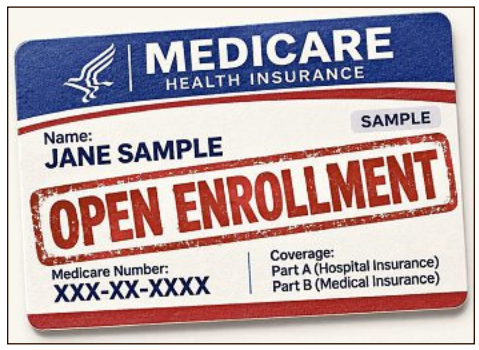
By Voice Health News

A $0 monthly plan premium and free routine doctor visits can make Medicare Advantage coverage sound inexpensive. But what would you owe for surgery, hospitalization or months of treatment?

Even frequent insurance users may not understand every benefit. Those who rarely need care may know little about costs beyond a checkup. Open enrollment is a time to understand your coverage—and make changes before you need more care.

Start with your **Annual Notice of Change,** generally received by September 30. It compares this year's costs and benefits with changes taking effect in January. If you misplaced it, request another copy from your insurer or find it on the plan's website.

Two other documents can help. The **Summary of Benefits** gives a shorter overview of coverage and charges. The **Evidence of Coverage** is the detailed member handbook explaining covered services, your costs, restrictions and approval requirements. Both are available from your insurer.



Medicare open enrollment ends Dec. 7. Look beyond a $0 plan premium to compare hospital copays, prescription costs and other expenses before choosing next year's coverage. AI-generated illustration

Changes vary by plan, but review these items annually:

- **Premiums and deductibles:** Regular payments and amounts you pay before coverage begins.
- **Copays and coinsurance:** Fixed charges or percentages you owe for care.
- **Hospital costs:** Daily charges and how many days they apply.
- **Out-of-pocket maximum:** Your annual limit for covered medical cost sharing.
- **Prescription coverage:** Covered drugs, their costs and preferred pharmacies.
- **Dental and other extras:** Allowances, covered procedures and benefit limits.
- **Networks and approvals:** Participating doctors, hospitals and requirements before treatment.

For 2027, most reported changes in plans include dental allowance reductions at several major insurers and higher prescription deductibles. Some plans are increasing medical cost sharing while retaining $0 premiums. These changes are not universal; check your specific plan.

Your Share Can Add Up Quickly

Consider hospitalization: a plan charging $665 daily for the first five inpatient days could leave you owing **$3,325** in hospital copayments. Other services may bring additional charges.

An in-network medical out-of-pocket maximum of **$7,150** offers protection, but that remains substantial. Premiums, Part D drug expenses and noncovered services fall outside that limit. It resets each calendar year. An illness beginning in November could generate bills toward one year's maximum, then start accumulating toward a new maximum January 1—even though the same illness continues.

Ask yourself what you have set aside. If your budget permits, automatically transfer money into a savings account designated for medical expenses. Saving $100 monthly builds $1,200 annually. A reserve takes time to build, so it should accompany coverage you can afford.

Medical bills can create serious financial hardship—even for people with insurance. A 2022 KFF survey found that about four in 10 U.S. adults had some form of debt from medical or dental bills.

Understand Who's Helping You Choose

Licensed insurance agents and brokers are allowed to sell Medicare plans and may receive commissions. They can explain coverage and help with enrollment, but they may not represent every insurer or plan available. Ask: "How many companies do you represent, and which plans aren't included in your comparison?"

For help from someone who does not sell insurance, call **SHICK in Kansas at 1-800-860-5260 or Missouri SHIP at 1-800-390-3330.** Both provide free, unbiased Medicare counseling.

Bring your plan documents and ask a counselor to explain what hospitalization, surgery and recovery could cost, and help you compare alternatives.

Annual Medicare open enrollment ends **December 7**, with changes taking effect January 1.

Common Changes This Year

Medicare Advantage plans are sold by private insurers. Nationally, UnitedHealthcare and Humana together cover nearly half of Medicare Advantage members. Other major companies include Aetna, owned by CVS Health; Kaiser Permanente; and Elevance Health. Availability depends on where you live.

Reported changes for 2027 illustrate why comparing specific plans matters: Insurer or brand changes reported for some members

UnitedHealthcare
Reduced dental allowances and increased medical cost sharing

Humana
Reduced or eliminated some Part B premium givebacks; modestly increased dental allowances

Aetna/CVS
Reduced dental allowances for some members

Wellcare/Centene
Reduced dental allowances for some members and increased medical out-of-pocket limits

These findings come from a national analysis of Medicare plan data reported by Healthcare Dive. They do not describe every plan or establish which company offers the best coverage in your county.



MORE THAN A PAIR OF SHOES

Two Wichita Women Changing Lives One Student at a Time

By Ty Davis
The Community Voice

A Wichita student desperately needed a new pair of shoes. The ones he wore to school had holes in them, but when offered a new pair, his first concern wasn't how they looked or whether they fit.

It was his mother's reaction.

"Would you please tell my mom I did not ask for these?" the boy asked, according to Benita Chaplin, co-founder of T.O.U.C.H. Closet.

Chaplin assured him the school social worker would explain that the assistance had been offered and that he hadn't requested anything.

For Chaplin, the encounter was a reminder that poverty affects families in ways that aren't always visible.

"If a parent has to decide whether they're going to keep the lights on or whether they're going to buy some shoes, we know that it's not a choice," Chaplin said.

That understanding is at the heart of T.O.U.C.H. Closet, a Wichita nonprofit founded in 2018 that provides shoes, coats, socks and undergarments to students experiencing difficult circumstances.

Now in its eighth year, the organization has served an estimated 600 to 700 students, according to its founders, Chaplin and Sarah Demby.

A LIFETIME OF SERVING CHILDREN

For Chaplin and Demby, helping children didn't begin with T.O.U.C.H. Closet. Both women spent decades witnessing the challenges facing families, and both opened their homes to young people who needed support.

Chaplin worked more than three decades in the court system. Her work exposed her to families facing eviction and children involved in child-in-need-of-care cases.

She recalled seeing parents arrive at the courthouse with children who lacked basic necessities.

But her compassion didn't stop at the courthouse doors.

Chaplin said she and her family welcomed at least seven young people into their home over the years, allowing them to stay as long as they needed without going through the formal foster care system or receiving financial assistance.

Demby developed a similar commitment to helping children through her 37 years working at Wesley Healthcare and her experiences raising a family.

She recalled how her home became a gathering place for her children's friends, including some who didn't always have enough food or other necessities at home.

The family provided meals, clothing, transportation to basketball practice and, when necessary, a place where young people could feel supported.

Her husband, a retired police officer who served as a school resource officer, also worked closely with young people.

"It's just what I know. It's what I do," Demby said.

Their shared passion eventually grew into something that would reach children throughout Wichita.



T.O.U.C.H. Closet co-founders Benita Chaplin and Sarah Demby help Wichita students get essentials such as new shoes through their work with local schools.

The idea for T.O.U.C.H. Closet emerged from homeless outreach through New Beginning Seventh-day Adventist Church.

While serving people experiencing homelessness in downtown Wichita, Chaplin and Demby noticed something often overlooked: children were among those struggling.

After retiring in 2017, Chaplin began considering her next chapter. She thought about opening a business but ultimately contacted Demby about starting a nonprofit focused on children.

Demby agreed.

In 2018, the women launched T.O.U.C.H. Closet with approximately $100, purchasing around 70 pairs of tennis shoes during a Payless clearance sale.

Although those shoes were eventually donated to a youth shelter, the founders decided they wanted their organization to provide name-brand footwear that could withstand an entire school year.

That commitment remains central to their work.

"We're not putting anything on anybody else's students' feet that we wouldn't put on our grandchildren's feet," Chaplin said.

What began with two school partnerships has grown to 20 Wichita Public Schools, including Hamilton, Mueller, Gordon Parks, Rosedale, West High and North High.

MORE THAN SHOES, IT'S ABOUT DIGNITY

Unlike a traditional clothing closet, T.O.U.C.H. Closet operates through referrals submitted by school social workers, counselors and other authorized school personnel.

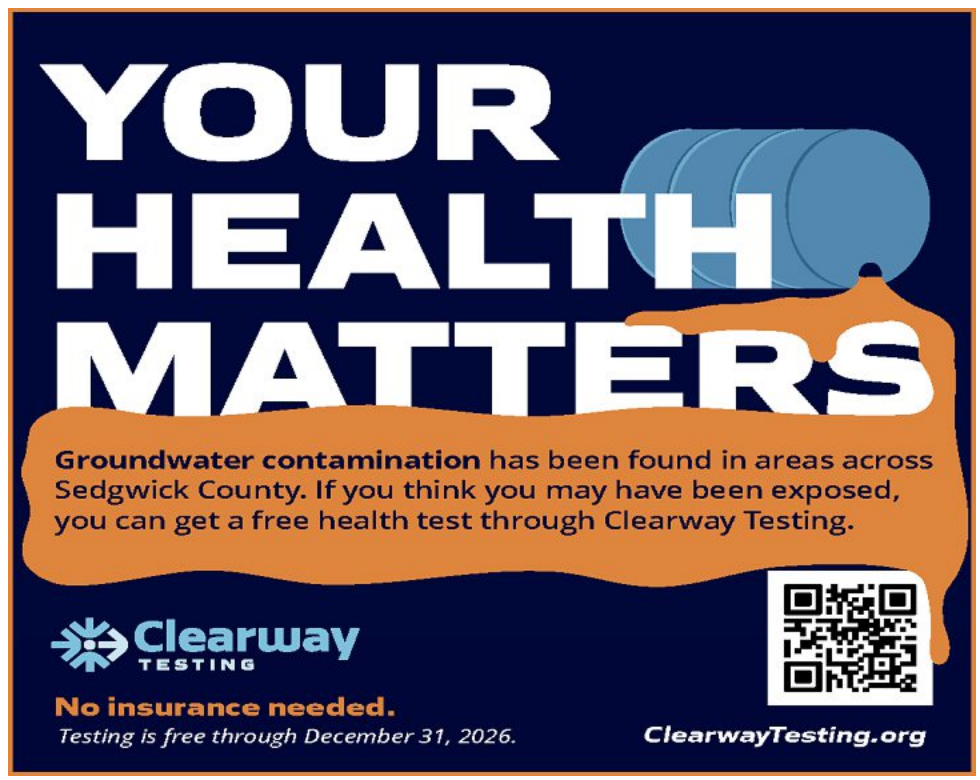
There are no income guidelines, and families aren't required to explain the circumstances that created their need.

One referral can cover every K–12 student in a household, even if the children attend different schools.

Students at partner schools receiving footwear are offered a choice between two pairs of name-brand shoes. Each pair comes with five pairs of socks.

See **SHOES** Page **12** →





From Three in History to Five in One Election

Voters elected the nation's first Black woman governor, its first elected Black Republican governor and the first Black governors of Florida, Wisconsin and Nevada.

By Bonita Gooch
Editor, In Chief



When we first introduced you to eight Black major-party candidates for governor, simply having that many on ballots in one election was historic.

Then America voted.

Five of the eight won — an extraordinary result in a country that, before 2026, had elected only three Black governors in its history.

The biggest history-maker was **Keisha Lance Bottoms,** the former Atlanta mayor who won Georgia's governorship and became the **first Black woman ever elected governor of a U.S. state.** Her victory also ended 24 years of Republican control of the Georgia governor's office.

In Maryland, **Wes Moore,** already the state's first Black governor, easily won a second term. The Associated Press called his race within minutes of the polls closing.

Republican **Byron Donalds** won a much closer race in Florida, becoming **Florida's first Black governor and the first Black Republican ever elected governor of a state.** Florida had not elected a Democratic governor since 1994.

Two more states elected their first Black governors.

David Crowley, the Milwaukee County executive, defeated Republican Tom Tiffany to become **Wisconsin's first Black governor.**

And in Nevada, Democratic Attorney General **Aaron Ford** defeated incumbent Republican Gov. Joe Lombardo to become **Nevada's first Black governor.**

A Very Short History

The numbers put 2026 into perspective.

L. Douglas Wilder of Virginia became the first Black person elected governor of a state in 1989. **Deval Patrick of Massachusetts** followed in 2006. **Wes Moore** became only the third when Maryland elected him in 2022.

Now, in a single election, voters added **four new names** to that remarkably short list: Bottoms, Donalds, Crowley and Ford.

Other Black governors have served without being elected to the office, including **P.B.S. Pinchback,** who briefly led Louisiana during Reconstruction, and **David Paterson,** who became New York governor after Eliot Spitzer resigned.

History Beyond the Five

The election produced other gubernatorial firsts.

In **New Mexico**, Democrat **Deb Haaland** became the nation's **first Native American woman elected governor.**

In **Texas,** Democrat **Gina Hinojosa** defeated incumbent Greg Abbott, becoming the state's **first Latina governor** and ending more than three decades of Republican control of the governor's office.

In the **U.S. Virgin Islands,** Democrat **Stacey Plaskett,** who is Black, won the governorship with nearly 63% of the vote, according to unofficial results. She becomes the **first woman elected governor of the U.S. Virgin Islands and the first Black woman elected governor of a U.S. territory.**

Plaskett comes to the job after more than a decade representing the Virgin Islands in Congress. Since 2015, she has represented St. Croix, St. Thomas, St. John and the territory's smaller islands as its at-large delegate to the U.S. House. Like other territorial delegates, she could serve on committees and participate in congressional debate but could not vote on final passage of legislation on the House floor.

Black men have previously served as governor of the predominantly Black Caribbean territory.

That means Election Day 2026 produced **two Black women gubernatorial history-makers at once:** Keisha Lance Bottoms became the first Black woman elected governor of a U.S. state, while Stacey Plaskett became the first Black woman elected governor of a U.S. territory.

BLACK AMERICANS IN THE U.S. SENATE

Senator	State	Years served
Hiram Revels	Mississippi	1870–1871
Blanche K. Bruce	Mississippi	1875–1881
Edward Brooke	Massachusetts	1967–1979
Carol Moseley Braun	Illinois	1993–1999
Barack Obama	Illinois	2005–2008
Roland Burris*	Illinois	2009–2010
Tim Scott	South Carolina	2013–present
William "Mo" Cowan*	Massachusetts	2013
Cory Booker	New Jersey	2013–present
Kamala Harris	California	2017–2021
Raphael Warnock	Georgia	2021–present
Laphonza Butler*	California	2023–2024
Angela Alsobrooks	Maryland	2025–present
Lisa Blunt Rochester	Delaware	2025–present

Incoming: Juliana Stratton of Illinois, elected to begin serving in January 2027.

Race undecided: Scott Colom of Mississippi.
*Appointed to fill unexpired terms
Source: U.S. Senate Historical Office; election reporting as of Nov. 5, 2026. www.senate.gov

Black Senate Representation Could Reach Historic Seven

By Bonita Gooch
Editor-in-Chief

Juliana Stratton's victory in Illinois and a potential upset by Scott Colom in Mississippi could bring the U.S. Senate to a record seven Black members — a remarkable shift for a chamber that, for much of its history, had none.

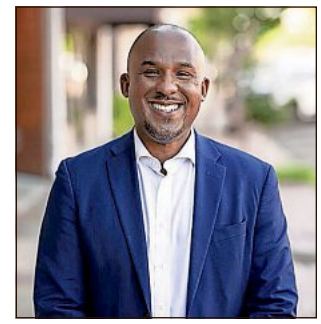
Stratton's election raises the number expected to serve in January to six. Colom could make seven, but his race remained uncalled Thursday. Meanwhile, New Jersey Democrat Cory Booker won reelection, extending a Senate career that began in 2013.

Illinois' first Black lieutenant governor, Stratton defeated Republican Don Tracy to succeed retiring Democrat Dick Durbin. Previously a state representative, she was twice elected lieutenant governor alongside Gov. JB Pritzker, whose backing helped her through a competitive Democratic primary.

See **SEVEN** Page **15** →



Illinois Sen.-elect Juliana Stratton will join Angela Alsobrooks and Lisa Blunt Rochester in January, marking the first time three Black women serve together in the U.S. Senate.



Democrat Scott Colom's Mississippi Senate race remained too close to call Nov. 5. A victory would make him the state's first Black senator since Reconstruction.

Kansas Blue Wave Reaches Beyond Hamilton's Historic Win

Democrats gained ground from Johnson County to Sedgwick County, while Cindy Holscher widened her lead in the governor's race.

Kansas Blue Wave: Key Takeaways

- **Adam Hamilton won Kansas'** first Democratic U.S. Senate victory since 1932, but all four U.S. House incumbents retained their seats.
- **Democrats gained a projected 20 Kansas House seats,** breaking the Republican supermajority and narrowing the GOP advantage to 68-57.
- **Cindy Holscher's lead for governor grew to 7,045 votes** as counting continues; the outcome remains unofficial.
- **Johnson County drove major Democratic gains,** while Sedgwick County voters ousted three Republican House incumbents and several majority Hispanic counties in Western Kansas also played a major role.

By Bonita Gooch
Editor-in-Chief

Adam Hamilton's historic U.S. Senate victory put Kansas in the national spotlight. But the state's blue wave reached well beyond one candidate, reshaping the Kansas House and leaving Democrats positioned for additional statewide gains.

Unofficial results showed Democrats picking up as many as 20 seat in the Kansas House, enough to break the Republican supermajority that has shaped state policy for 16 years. The projected Republican advantage in the House would shrink from 88-37 to 68-57, giving Republicans their smallest margin since 1992.

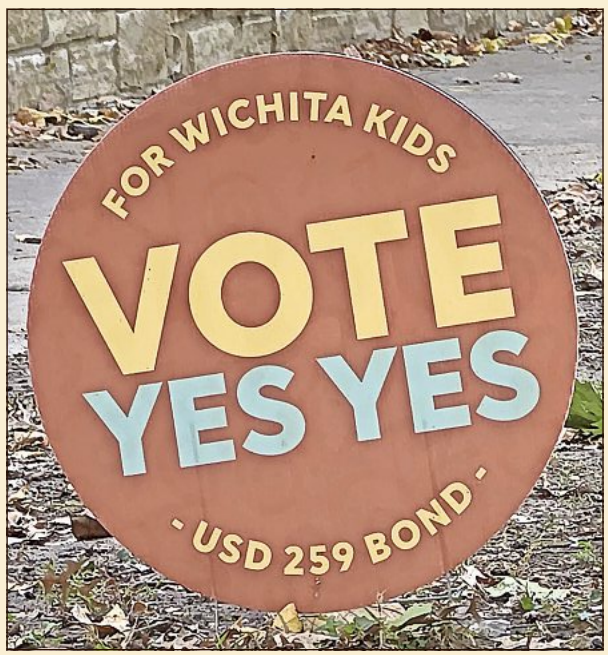
Republicans would still control the chamber. But their ability to govern without Democratic cooperation would change substantially.

See **BLUE WAVE** Page **9** →



Cindy Holscher addresses supporters at her Nov. 3 election watch party in Lenexa as running mate KC Ohaebosim looks on. Her lead over Republican Ty Masterson grew as counting continued. *(PHOTO BY BAYA BURGESS FOR KANSAS REFLECTOR)*

Kansas Ballot Decisions: What Passed, What Didn't



Kansas voters delivered mixed results on ballot questions Nov. 3, rejecting two Wyandotte County sales taxes, approving both Wichita school bond proposals and adopting a statewide citizenship amendment. Here's what those decisions mean for residents.

What Passed, What Didn't

Kansas voters delivered mixed results on ballot questions Nov. 3, rejecting two Wyandotte County sales taxes, approving both Wichita school bond proposals and adopting a statewide citizenship amendment. Here's what those decisions mean for residents.

Wyandotte Voters Reject Two Sales Tax Increases

Wyandotte County voters rejected two sales tax increases Nov. 3, turning down funding for health services, parks and infrastructure.

Nearly 53% opposed a countywide quarter-cent tax projected to raise $12 million annually for health care and services for people experiencing homelessness. In Kansas City, Kansas, about 54% rejected a three-eighths-cent tax expected to generate $16 million annually, divided between parks and infrastructure. Planned projects included replacing the aging **Parkwood Pool.**

Before the election, Mayor Christal Watson urged support for the infrastructure measure, saying dedicated funding would help address aging streets, damaged sidewalks, deteriorating bridges and recreation facilities.

After the defeat, Commissioner Andrew Davis acknowledged shortcomings in the effort to win support.

"We did not put in the time and strategy needed to get the sales tax initiatives through," Davis wrote. "My hope is that we will learn from this, build trust, and find creative ways to meet the needs of community."

His comments offered no specific replacement funding plan.

Kansas Approves Citizenship Amendment Despite Voting Rights Concerns

Kansas voters approved a constitutional amendment Nov. 3 emphasizing that only U.S. citizens may vote, even though noncitizens were already prohibited from voting

See **BALLOT DECISIONS** Page **9** →

BLUE WAVE, from Page **8** ↓

A National Spotlight

Hamilton defeated Republican Sen. Roger Marshall, becoming the first Democrat elected to the U.S. Senate from Kansas since 1932.

The race attracted extraordinary national attention and Republican intervention. President Donald Trump and Vice President JD Vance each visited Kansas twice to rally support for Marshall.

It wasn't enough.

Hamilton, a United Methodist pastor, campaigned on affordability and bringing people across party lines together. His victory demonstrated that a Democrat could build a winning statewide coalition even in a state Trump carried comfortably in three presidential elections.

Holscher's Lead Grows

Democrat Cindy Holscher's path to the governor's office strengthened as additional counting widened her lead over Republican Ty Masterson.

Updated unofficial results from the Kansas secretary of state showed Holscher with 5 a 7,045-vote advantage, up from roughly 5,000 earlier in the count.

The movement favored Holscher and her lieutenant governor running mate, Wichita Rep. KC Ohaebosim. Masterson also acknowledged that the early changes in the count were not favoring him.

Although outstanding ballots and a mandatory close-race audit leave the outcome unresolved, Holscher was increasingly well positioned to keep the governor's office in Democratic hands following Gov. Laura Kelly's two terms.

Holscher campaigned on property tax relief, public education, Medicaid expansion and legalizing cannabis.

Statewide Races Remain Unsettled

Democrat Chris Mann also led Republican Attorney General Kris Kobach in their rematch of the 2022 election. Mann claimed victory Wednesday, although the race remained unsettled due to a required recount of ballots in elections where the winner prevails by less than 1% of the votes.

Kobach's potential defeat would mark another reversal in a lengthy political career. He served as secretary of state from 2011 to 2019, lost the 2018 governor's race to Kelly and lost the 2020 Republican U.S. Senate primary before winning the attorney general's office in 2022. He also unsuccessfully ran for Congress in 2004.

The wave had limits. Republican Dan Hawkins won insurance commissioner, and Republican Treasurer Steven Johnson won reelection. Republican Pat Proctor led Democrat Jennifer Day for secretary of state, another race subject to a close-race audit.

A Different Balance in Topeka

The most consequential change for everyday lawmaking may be in the Kansas House.

Overriding a governor's veto requires a two-thirds vote which is 84 of the House's 125 members. With a projected 68 Republicans, GOP leaders would need substantial Democratic support to override the governor's veto, even if every Republican voted together. Putting constitutional amendments before voters also requires a two-thirds vote in both chambers.

If Holscher wins, Democrats would have a stronger position to sustain her vetoes. If Masterson wins, Republicans could pass ordinary legislation with their majority and his signature, but would lack the House votes to advance constitutional amendments alone.

Their gain in seats also gets Democrats more seats on legislative committees, giving them a larger role in shaping proposals before floor votes.

House Minority Leader Brandon Woodard credited candidate recruitment, organizing and attention to living costs, schools and healthcare.

The results, Woodard told the Kansas Reflector, had "effectively shattered the Republican supermajority and restored balance to the Kansas Legislature."

That creates an opening for negotiation, although closer numbers alone cannot guarantee greater civility or agreement.

Where the Wave Landed

Johnson County supplied a major share of the state's shift toward Democrats, with the party poised to flip at least 10 House seats in that county. Those gains expanded Democratic strength in the Kansas City metro beyond traditionally Democratic Wyandotte County.

Among the most prominent Republican casualties was House Majority Leader Chris Croft, a potential contender for House speaker. Democrat Megan Phillips defeated him 51% to 49%.

Sedgwick County contributed to the blue wave, too. Democrats unseated three Republican House incumbents, including Steven Brunk, who was first elected to represent Bel Aire's 85th District in 2003 and had a 100% rating from the American Conservative Union.

The shift extended into southwest Kansas. Three traditionally Republican counties backed Hamilton following immigration raids in meatpacking communities. Reporting linked the movement to concerns about immigration enforcement and household finances, although neither alone explains every vote

Congressional Seats Hold; Education Board Shifts

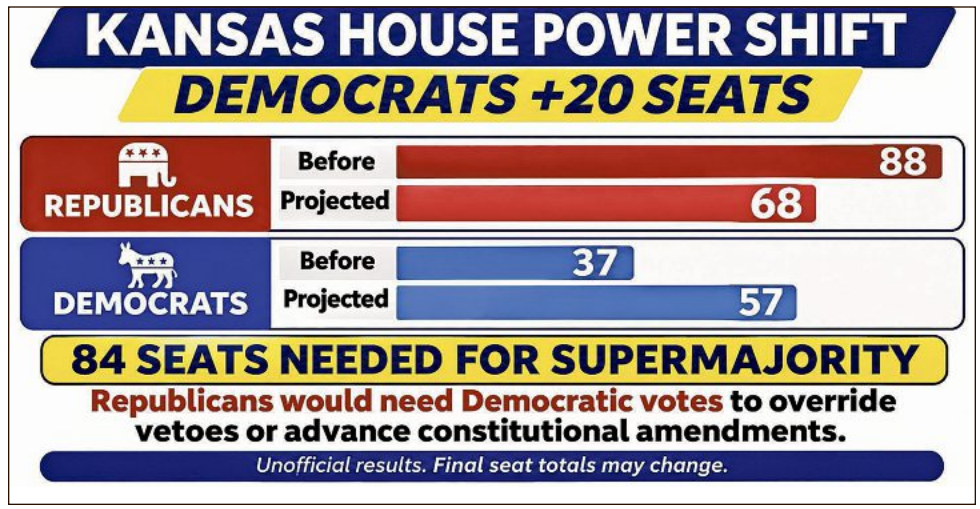
The blue wave didn't make it to the state's Congressional delegation. All four Kansas U.S. House incumbents won reelection: Republicans Tracey Mann, Derek Schmidt and Ron Estes, and Democrat Sharice Davids. Republican victory margins narrowed, but Democrats gained no additional House seats in Washington.

Democrats gained one Kansas State Board of Education seat. Former teacher Amy Diediker flipped a Johnson and Miami county district, bringing the board to six Republicans and four Democrats.

All five incumbents whose seats were on the ballot declined to seek reelection. The newcomers emphasized achievement, but ideological differences remain: Republican winner Amy Cawvey had endorsements from conservative groups Moms for Liberty and Kansans for Life.

The broader message was a demand for attention to affordability, healthcare and public schools, issues Democratic candidates repeatedly emphasized.

The next statewide test of legislative control comes in 2028. All 40 Kansas Senate seats will be up for election as will all 125 house seats again. So Dems can't rest on their laurels. Without a strong followup, Kansas could be right back where it was was two years from now.



BALLOT DECISIONS, from Page **8** ↓

in Kansas.

The ballot explanation described a yes vote as clarifying citizenship requirements and a no vote as leaving existing language unchanged. It did not explain that citizenship was already required.

The amendment itself **does not require a birth certificate or passport to register.** But opponents, including the League of Women Voters of Kansas, warned it could lay groundwork for renewed documentary proof-of-citizenship requirements that could prevent eligible citizens from registering.

"This result is deeply disappointing," League President Marlene Merrill said in a statement after the vote. "Our commitment to Kansas voters remains strong."

Wichita Voters Approve Both School Bond Questions

Wichita school district voters approved both bond questions Nov. 3, authorizing $615 million in improvements after narrowly rejecting a $450 million proposal in February 2025.

Question 1: $407.1 million. Continues the existing bond tax rate as older debt is retired, with no rate increase. Projects include rebuilding Truesdell, Black, McLean and Chisholm Trail schools; adding middle school classrooms at Cessna; building a trades training center; and preserving East and North high schools.

Question 2: $207.9 million. Adds approximately $50 annually in property taxes on a $200,000 home. It funds rebuilding Coleman Middle and Adams Elementary, expanding career training facilities, and renovating existing buildings for early childhood, dual-language and alternative education programs.

Missouri's Other Amendments

What Passed, What Failed

Beyond Proposition A, Missouri voters decided four constitutional amendments on the Nov. 3 statewide ballot. Here's how they voted and what the results mean.

Unofficial Nov. 3 results, rounded.

Amendment 3

Abortion restrictions:

FAILED 55.5% No | 44.5% Yes

Voters rejected repealing the reproductive rights amendment they approved in 2024, preserving constitutional protections for abortion through fetal viability. The proposal also would have added a constitutional ban on gender transition procedures for minors; its defeat does not repeal existing state restrictions.

Amendment 6

Giving voters the final say:

PASSED 60% Yes | 40% No

The amendment makes it harder for lawmakers to undo decisions voters make through citizen-led ballot measures. To change a law voters approved through a citizen initiative, lawmakers must first approve the proposed change with an 80% vote in each chamber, then send it to voters for final approval. It also prevents lawmakers from making it harder for citizens to get measures onto the ballot.

Amendment 7

Investment fund to replace taxes:

FAILED 60.5% No | 39.5% Yes

Voters rejected creating the "Show-Me Prosperity Fund," a permanent state investment fund intended to eventually replace state taxes with investment earnings. The outcome leaves the existing tax system unchanged. Even passage would not have immediately eliminated taxes.

Amendment 8

Constitutional protections for sheriffs:

PASSED 51% Yes | 49% No

The amendment puts four-year sheriff elections and sheriffs' duties into the constitution rather than leaving them solely in state law. It also limits removal of an elected sheriff to a court proceeding initiated by the attorney general.

Missouri Rejected the Map.

Will Republicans Try Again?

Cleaver says "it's over," but Hoskins sees another opening. Any renewed Republican effort would face significant legal and political hurdles.

By Bonita Gooch
Editor, In Chief



A person holds a sign opposing Proposition A, the congressional map Missouri voters rejected Nov. 3. The vote preserves the 2022 district boundaries, while new voter protections could make another redraw harder. *AP PHOTO/CHARLIE RIEDEL*

Missouri voters rejected Proposition A, preserving the state's 2022 congressional boundaries. But whether Republicans will attempt another redraw remains an open question.

For U.S. Rep. Emanuel Cleaver, whose Kansas City district would have been divided under the rejected plan, the answer is straightforward.

"It's over," Cleaver told The Kansas City Star.

Secretary of State Denny Hoskins sees a possible opening. He argues a U.S. Supreme Court ruling limiting race-based redistricting could force Missouri to revisit its map.

However, that ruling concerned Louisiana. The Supreme Court has not declared Missouri's 2022 map unconstitutional. Having a majority-Black district does not, by itself, establish that a map is unlawful.

Lawmakers are not categorically barred from proposing another map before the next census. But their path has become considerably harder.



U.S. Rep. Emanuel Cleaver says "it's over" after Missouri voters rejected Proposition A, preserving his Kansas City-based congressional district. Another Republican redraw would face new legal and political hurdles.

Voters also approved Amendment 6, restricting lawmakers' ability to pass legislation "similar in effect" to a law rejected by referendum. Legal experts say with Amendment 6 in place, another comparable redraw "could" require approval from 80% of both legislative chambers, followed by another statewide vote. Courts may ultimately decide how that restriction applies.

Republicans also lost the two-thirds majorities needed to approve emergency clauses which makes a measure effective immediately. Now, with their decreased numbers, Republicans don't have enough votes to get an emergency measure through without Democratic support. Last session, Republicans failed to move the redrawn map forward as an emergency measure, most likely because even though they had enough members to get it through, they didn't have the commitment from enough of them to reach the 2/3 requirement. If a replacement map falls outside Amendment 6's restrictions of "similar in effect," opponents could still pursue a citizen referendum petition to suspend the new law and put it before voters.

The remaining question is political: After voters rejected the map and defeated Republican legislators, will GOP leaders want another fight?

Cleaver considers the matter settled. Hoskins does not. For now, the 2022 map remains in place.

Missouri Republicans Rethink Priorities After Election Losses

Democrats gained 16 House seats and two Senate seats, weakening Republican control and prompting calls for a change in direction.

By Bonita Gooch
Editor, In Chief

Missouri Democrats delivered their strongest legislative showing in decades Nov. 3, flipping 16 state House seats and two Senate seats to break Republican supermajorities in both chambers.

Republicans will still control the General Assembly and governor's office. But the results leave Democrats with greater influence and Republicans confronting questions about whether their own agenda helped fuel the backlash.

According to unofficial results, the Missouri House will have 95 Republicans and 68 Democrats when lawmakers convene in January. Democrats captured 16 Republican-held districts while Republicans failed to flip a single Democratic seat.

The gains ended a Republican House supermajority that had stood since 2012 and left the GOP with its smallest House delegation since 2008.

Democrats defeated 10 Republican House

See **REPUBLICAN PRIORITIES** Page **13** →

Jackson County's New Leaders Face Task of Restoring Trust

Stacy Lake and seven new legislators take office in January after years of property tax disputes, political infighting and leadership turmoil.

By Bonita Gooch
Editor, In Chief

Jackson County will enter 2027 with a new executive and seven new legislators after four years marked by property tax disputes, political infighting, a recall and criminal allegations.

Democrat Stacy Lake defeated Republican Alan Rohlfing with approximately 68% of the vote, according to unofficial results. She takes office Jan. 1 alongside a nine-member Legislature returning only Donna Peyton and Venessa Huskey. Democrats will hold eight seats.

Lake's victory grew from organizing around the county's troubled property assessment system. After helping neighbors challenge assessments following the 2019 reassessment, she challenged Frank White Jr. in 2022, winning approximately 47% of the Democratic primary vote. White was recalled in September 2025.

This August, her grassroots campaign defeated better-connected contenders in the Democratic primary, including Freedom Inc.-backed former legislator Dan Tarwater III.

The executive race reflected the county's instability. Interim Executive Phil LeVota filed despite promising not to seek a full term, then withdrew in April. Prosecutors later charged him of offering Legislator DaRon McGee county employment in exchange for abandoning his executive campaign. LeVota denies wrongdoing and is seeking dismissal. Separately, legislators removed Manny Abarca as chairman in July and replaced him with Peyton.



Stacy Wilson



Stacy Lake



Carla Fields



Byron Townsend

African-American Representation

The incoming Legislature includes four mature Black women whose professional and community experience could help bring stability to a body marked by controversy. Expectations were also high four years ago, when a new majority coalition that included Manny Abarca promised change. Instead, divisions and leadership struggles repeatedly overshadowed that promise.

Joining returning members Donna Peyton and Venessa Huskey are attorney Carla Fields and retired UMKC vice chancellor Susan B. Wilson.

Wilson is a retired UMKC vice chancellor and clinical psychologist. Wilson is a clinical psychologist and retired UMKC vice chancellor. Fields, 56, brings approximately three decades of legal experience and has served as president of the Jackson County Bar Association. She defeated incumbent Jalen Anderson in the Democratic primary.

McGee's backed successor, Byron Townsend, will represent the 4th District. The longtime political allies served together on the Hickman Mills school board.

Other Incoming Members of the Legislature

Other newcomers include Democrats Kelly Thompson, replacing Democrat Manny Abarca in the 1st District, and Phyllis Hernandez, succeeding Democrat Charlie Franklin in the 3rd District.

In the two seats currently held by Republicans, Republican Dale Carter will replace retiring Republican Jeanie Lauer in the 5th District. Democrat Tony Lawson will replace Republican Sean Smith in the 6th District, flipping that seat to Democratic control.

Lake's KC Roots Run Deep

Lake, born in 1987, brings both Kansas City family roots and international experience. Born in Kansas City and raised in Leawood, she attended high school in the Blue Valley district, earned a finance degree from the University of Kansas in 2010 and graduated from UMKC School of Law in 2014.

A former Chinese translator, she studied in Taiwan and interned at a Beijing law firm before returning to Kansas City to practice law.

Her family has deep Kansas roots. Her mother Stacy Myers Battle was a local dentist. Her maternal grandfather, Sere S. Myers, was a pastor and real estate broker; her grandmother operated Classic Touch, the Crown Center floral shop. Her father is an attorney who returned to his home country of Anguilla where he practices law.Lake is married to Bryan Danaher, a software engineer at the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City.

Her agenda includes an audit, assessment reform, infrastructure improvements and expanded transit. The challenge now is translating new leadership into dependable government and restored public trust.

Voters Renew COMBAT Sales Tax

Jackson County voters approved renewing the COMBAT sales tax for another 10 years on Nov. 3, with approximately 72% voting yes, according to unofficial results.

The existing quarter-cent tax generates roughly $30 million to $35 million annually for public safety, violence prevention and substance abuse prevention and treatment. Funding supports law enforcement, prosecution, treatment courts and community organizations, including ArtsTech and the AdHoc Group Against Crime.

The vote continues the existing tax rate.

To learn more about the tax, scan QR code

KC Democrats Hold Seats as Suburban Districts Turn Blue

Kansas City's core Democratic legislative districts delivered few election surprises Nov. 3, while surrounding suburban voters helped dismantle Republican supermajorities in Missouri's Legislature.

Democratic Reps. Yolanda Young, District 22; Tiffany Price, District 26; and Melissa Douglas, District 27, won reelection unopposed. Young enters her final term under House term limits. Price and Douglas, first elected in 2024, begin their second terms. Donna Barnes, District 28, and Anthony Ealy, District 36, defeated Republican challengers.

Two familiar names are leaving Jefferson City with City Hall in their sights. Michael Johnson, District 23, and Mark Sharp, District 37, chose not to seek their final eligible House terms, instead setting their sights on Kansas City Council seats.

Johnson plans to pursue the 3rd District council seat held by term-limited Melissa Robinson. Sharp is seeking the 5th District seat held by Mayor Pro Tem Ryana Parks-Shaw, who is term-limited and running for mayor.

Their chosen successors won their races unopposed.

Tony L. Van Trece, who succeeds Michael Johnson in House District 23, is a partner at Oppenheimer Law, where he leads the firm's real estate and transactional practice. He previously served as an assistant city attorney and development specialist for Kansas City, advising on zoning, development incentives and public-private

See **SEATS** Page **13** →

SHOES, from Page 6 ↓

Depending on their needs, students may also receive coats, underwear, T-shirts, sports bras or hoodies.

The founders believe those choices matter because children experiencing hardship still deserve to feel confident and respected.

Chaplin recalled meeting students who had never received a pair of shoes directly from a shoebox. Others had shoes with soles separating from the tops, yet continued attending school.

Some students become so excited about receiving new shoes that their reactions have become lasting memories.

The organization also tries to accommodate individual needs.

In one instance, a school social worker requested Crocs for a student with sensory difficulties. In another case, a high school student requested boots because he walked to school and worried about winter weather.

They believe their work can also help reduce bullying, build self-esteem and relieve some of the financial pressure on families.

"If we focus on the students, the parents can focus on the crisis," Chaplin said.

GROWING IMPACT AND BUILDING A LASTING LEGACY

T.O.U.C.H. Closet has expanded its reach steadily, with the founders estimating that they served more than 100 students during each of the previous two school years.

This school year, they introduced an open-voucher program for students attending USD 259 schools outside their 20 regular partnerships.

The program initially offered 15 vouchers, but a $3,700 donation helped increase the number to 35. Approximately 20 had been used at the time of the interview, with plans to replenish them as resources allow.

Requests are typically fulfilled within 24 to 72 hours, often by the following day. Chaplin, who personally handles many deliveries, said she has responded to urgent requests within hours.

"Our goal is not to be a warehouse. Our goal is to put shoes on feet," she said.

The organization operates without paying rent for its storage space, thanks to New Beginning Seventh-day Adventist Church. Financial support comes from individual donors, churches, community contributions and employee charitable-giving programs.

Chaplin and Demby especially appreciate donors such as Glenda Turner, a senior citizen on a fixed income who contributes monthly.

They say those contributions reflect the community's growing belief in their mission.

Their work has also received public recognition, including a 2020 Everyday Hero honor through Wichita's Difference Makers program and a 2025 Kansas Department of Commerce nonprofit merit award.



A worn sneaker sits beside a new one, showing the difference a fresh pair of shoes can make for a student. T.O.U.C.H. Closet helps Wichita students get shoes their families may struggle to afford.

Looking ahead, the founders hope to expand their impact through additional community support.

They are in the early planning stages of the 2027 T.O.U.C.H. Gala, a black-tie fundraising event intended to bring businesses, organizations and community members together in support of Wichita students.

But for Chaplin, the organization's long-term vision extends beyond fundraising or the number of shoes distributed.

She hopes the children receiving help today will one day be in a position to help someone else.

The organization's name, **Touching Others Until Change Happens,** reflects that belief.

Chaplin said she prayed for a name that carried meaning and represented something that could continue long after the founders were gone.

"While we can't touch every student, we can touch one student at a time. One family at a time."

Demby shares that commitment.

"We are just women of God doing God's work through our love of children," she said.

For both women, the greatest reward isn't an award or public recognition. It's seeing the expression on a child's face when they realize the new shoes in front of them are theirs to keep.

For more information about T.O.U.C.H. Closet, visit www.thetouchcloset.org.

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REPUBLICAN PRIORITIES, from Page **10** ↓

incumbents and expanded beyond their urban strongholds. They won three seats in St. Charles County, where they had been shut out for nearly 20 years, and scored unexpected victories in Cass County and Jefferson City.

In Jefferson City, Suzanne Luther, a former school board member, won the district that includes the governor's mansion.

The Senate victories included state Rep. Keri Ingle's defeat of Republican House Speaker Jon Patterson in eastern Jackson County. In Springfield, state Rep. Betsy Fogle captured a seat Republicans had held for more than 80 years.

The Democratic surge also reached Congress, where Fred Wellman defeated seven-term Republican U.S. Rep. Ann Wagner in the St. Louis-area 2nd District. Democrats had spent years trying to capture the suburban seat, hoping changing voting patterns would deliver a breakthrough similar to their gains in Johnson County, Kansas. Wagner survived competitive challenges in 2018 and 2020, and redrawn boundaries made her district more Republican-friendly in 2022. This year, Democrats finally broke through.

Republicans offered competing explanations for the losses.

"We need to focus on the business of the people, and quit pursuing what I would call just personal pet projects of individual legislators, and do what people want done," House Speaker Pro Tem Chad Perkins told the Missouri Independent.

The defeats followed repeated voter rejection of major Republican-backed proposals brought forward by Missouri Gov. Mike Kehoe's administration. In August, voters rejected constitutional amendments to replace the state income tax with sales taxes and make citizen-initiated constitutional amendments harder to pass. On Tuesday, they rejected a proposal to ban almost all abortions, despite campaigning by first lady Claudia Kehoe.

Incoming House Speaker Alex Riley attributed the losses primarily to national politics.

"It was a blue tsunami that impacted the entire country," Riley told the Independent.

Newly selected House Majority Leader Darin Chappell acknowledged Republicans were reassessing their direction.

"If we need to change course on specific issues, we will," he said.

The diminished majorities still allow Republicans to pass ordinary legislation and budgets without Democratic votes. But they will need support across the aisle to override gubernatorial vetoes or approve emergency clauses making legislation effective immediately.

For Democrats, the election delivered both more seats and a stronger role in how Missouri is governed.

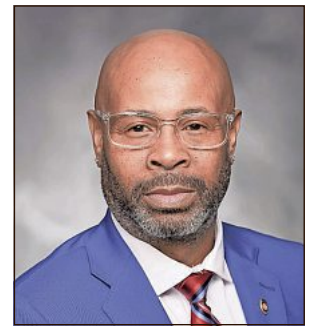
SEATS, from Page **11** ↓

partnerships. Before that, he spent approximately two years as an assistant prosecuting attorney in Jackson County.

Karissa Varga succeeds Sharp. A registered nurse, Varga serves on the boards of the Hickman Mills Educational Foundation, South Kansas City Alliance and Southland Progress. Her priorities include healthcare, public schools and affordable housing.

Ealy's reelection was followed by an arrest Wednesday in Jefferson City. Prosecutors charged him with fourth-degree assault and disturbing the peace after police alleged he threatened another person. He remained jailed without

See **SEATS** Page **15** →



Mike Johnson



Mark Sharp



Karissa Varga



Anthony Ealy



Tony Van Trece







Chiefs Agreement Secures Local Seats, Expands Tax Pledge

Commissioners approved a larger local tax pledge area alongside negotiated protections for utilities, local representation and bridge funding.

Wyandotte County commissioners voted unanimously Nov. 5 to advance a negotiated settlement with Kansas over the Chiefs stadium project.

In two 10–0 votes, commissioners repealed an ordinance intended to exempt the Unified Government from portions of the state sports-authority law and amended the local tax pledge supporting the stadium.

The actions advance several priorities commissioners sought in negotiations: local representation on bodies overseeing the stadium and community-benefit funding, protections for BPU's utility services and $135 million in state funding for Central Avenue Bridge repairs. The amended pledge also expands the area contributing local taxes.

"The collaboration in recent days has literally been a game changer," Mayor Christal Watson said when the settlement framework was announced Oct. 23.

What Local Government Pledged

In February, commissioners voted 7–3 to commit specified sales, use and hotel taxes generated within the local project area toward repayment of state-issued Sales Tax and Revenue, or STAR, bonds.

As part of the final agreement, the area covered by the pledge was increased from 235-acres to 440 acres, described in the earlier agreement announcement. The expansion follows the Chiefs' acquisition of additional property options around the stadium site.

The amended pledge retains the original revenue sources while expanding the collection area:

- All revenue from KCK's **1% general sales and use tax** not otherwise committed by voters, collected within the pledge area.
- The UG's **93.1733% share of the county's 1% general sales and use tax** not otherwise committed by voters, collected within that area.
- Revenue from **eight percentage points of KCK's hotel guest tax** on stays within the pledge area, subject to the state's administrative deduction.



A rendering shows the Chiefs' planned $3 billion enclosed stadium in Kansas City, Kansas, expected to open in 2031. This month, Wyandotte County commissioners approved an expanded local tax pledge alongside settlement provisions securing local representation, utility protections and bridge funding. *RENDERING COURTESY OF KANSAS CITY CHIEFS/MANICA*

KCK's hotel guest-tax rate is currently 10%, leaving two percentage points outside the pledge. The extra 2% is a temporary increase that expires Dec. 31, 2028 when the rate returns to 8% unless the UG commission acts to extend it. The hotel tax itself and the stadium pledge do not expire then.

The overall tax pledge lasts up to 30 years and ends when the covered bonds, including refinancing bonds, are repaid. Its starting revenue base is zero, meaning revenue from the specified taxes within the area is pledged from the beginning.

Despite the acreage expansion, Todd LaSala, the Unified Government's outside attorney handling the stadium negotiations." told commissioners that projected pledge revenues remained largely unchanged. The presentation estimated approximately $448 million over 30 years, while cautioning that actual collections depend on future activity.

The agreement preserves Wyco planning and zoning authority over surrounding commercial development. The state sports authority will own the stadium, which the Chiefs will lease for $7 million annually.

Two Districts, Different Commitments

The approximately 440-acre local pledge area is separate from the much larger state STAR bond district, which includes portions of several cities in Wyandotte and Johnson counties.

Within that larger district, Kansas is pledging growth in specified state sales-tax revenue toward the Chiefs project. Those boundaries do not automatically commit local sales taxes from every community within them.

Additional shopping, dining and development outside the local pledge generated from games and just Chief related tourism, will produce increased local revenue that is not committed under this stadium pledge.

Inside the pledge area, associated development is included in the local sales-tax and hotel-tax commitment. The state sports authority will own the stadium, which the Chiefs will lease for $7 million The agreement preserves Wyco planning and zoning authority over surrounding commercial development. However, keeping local zoning authority over that development does not exempt it from the pledge.

Local Seats on Two Oversight Bodies

The settlement provides local representation on two separate bodies.

Watson is to take a seat on the **Kansas Sports Facilities Authority board,** which oversees stadium construction, financing and management.

The UG will also have representation on the **five-member community impact committee,** which helps determine how community-benefit funding is allocated and spent.

Those appointments remain steps to be completed following the commission's vote. Officials said representation was secured through negotiations, allowing commissioners to remove the separate committee-representation condition from their tax pledge.

See **STADIUM** Page **15** →



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George Rogers, 91
Sep 23, 1935 — Oct 20, 2026 Service will be held at 10 am on Mon, Nov. 9 at University United Methodist Church, 2220 N. Yale

SEATS, from Page **13** ↓

bond Thursday. Democratic leaders said they removed his committee assignments this spring so he could address personal issues and do not plan to restore them. The allegations have not been proven in court.

Across the metro, Democrats flipped seven Republican-held House seats: three in Jackson County, two in Clay County, one in Platte County and one in Cass County. Four Republican incumbents — Chris Brown, Bill Allen, Mike Steinmeyer and Ron Fowler — lost.

Democrat Keri Ingle also defeated Republican House Speaker Jon Patterson for Senate District 8. Statewide, Democrats gained 16 House seats and two Senate seats, ending GOP supermajorities in both chambers. Republicans retain control, but now need Democratic votes for veto overrides and emergency clauses. Results remain unofficial.

SEVEN, from Page **7** ↓

She will join Maryland's Angela Alsobrooks and Delaware's Lisa Blunt Rochester, marking the first time three Black women serve together in the Senate. Illinois will also become the first state represented simultaneously by two women of color: Stratton and Tammy Duckworth, who is Asian American.

In Mississippi, Colom, a Democratic district attorney, led Republican incumbent Cindy Hyde-Smith by 1,138 votes in unofficial results Wednesday evening, with approximately 96% of the expected vote counted.

His showing represents a stunning challenge in a Republican stronghold with a history of racial exclusion and division. Mississippi has not elected a Democrat to the Senate since 1982 or sent a Black senator to Washington since Reconstruction.

A Colom victory would connect the Senate's expanding Black membership to its earliest beginnings.

Mississippi sent the nation's first two Black senators: Hiram Revels, who served from 1870 to 1871, and Blanche K. Bruce, who served from 1875 to 1881. Both were Republicans chosen by the state legislature.

After Bruce departed, nearly 86 years passed without a Black senator. Massachusetts Republican Edward Brooke broke that barrier in 1967, becoming the first Black senator elected by popular vote. He served until 1979.

Illinois Democrat Carol Moseley Braun became the first Black woman senator in 1993. Barack Obama followed in 2005. Stratton will become Illinois' fourth Black senator, counting Roland Burris, who was appointed to replace Obama.

Kamala Harris represented California from 2017 to 2021 before becoming vice president.

Today's five Black senators are Booker, Alsobrooks, Blunt Rochester, Georgia Democrat Raphael Warnock and South Carolina Republican Tim Scott. With Stratton — and potentially Colom — their growing ranks would mark another milestone in a history long defined by absence.

STADIUM, from Page **14** ↓

Commissioners also removed conditions requiring matching state and local district boundaries and UG approval of final project documents. Those protections must now be understood through the negotiated agreements rather than the original pledge conditions.

Protections for BPU Electricity and Water

The settlement provides more detail about the Board of Public Utilities' role in supplying both electricity and water.

For stadium electricity, another provider—such as Evergy—cannot serve the project without a separate agreement with BPU. That provider must compensate BPU for the right to serve within its electric territory.

BPU will exclusively provide stadium water service. The settlement also establishes a contractual water-service payment intended to resemble the payment in lieu of taxes, or PILOT, blocked under the state stadium law. That payment is separate from the electricity arrangement.

Commercial development surrounding the stadium will pay the normal BPU PILOT. BPU and the UG remain the utility providers for surrounding development, while the UG will provide stadium wastewater and stormwater services.

The agreement preserves Wyco planning and zoning authority over surrounding commercial development. However, keeping local zoning authority over that development does not exempt it from the pledge.

State Commits Bridge Funding

The settlement puts the previously discussed Central Avenue Bridge commitment into contractual terms.

According to the presentation to commissioners, the state has allocated **$135 million to the Kansas Department of Transportation** for repairs, without requiring approval from another governing body.

The agreement also limits the stadium-related property-tax exemption to **355 acres,** with additional acreage subject to a payment in lieu of taxes. That exemption boundary is separate from the approximately 440-acre local sales-tax pledge area.

Taxes That Still Support Local Services

Even inside the pledge area, some sales taxes remain available for their designated local purposes.

The ordinance excludes KCK's **0.25% emergency medical services tax** and **0.375% public safety and neighborhood infrastructure tax,** along with other voter-dedicated taxes and specified special-district revenues.

Those excluded taxes would still be collected on applicable taxable purchases inside the stadium and surrounding development and should increase significantly. Their revenue would support designated services rather than stadium bond repayment.

Together, those two taxes total **0.625%,** generating **$625,000 for every additional $100 million in taxable sales.** The net gain would depend partly on how much spending is new rather than shifted from existing KCK businesses.

Projected Financial Benefit

A February analysis projected approximately **$92 million in net benefits over 25 years,** after estimated public costs—an annual average of about **$3.7 million.**

Reporting on that analysis identified unpledged sales taxes, property taxes from surrounding development and other local revenues among the anticipated benefits. However, the available summaries do not establish precisely how much development or spending outside the pledge area was assumed.

The earlier estimate also predates the expanded local pledge area and should not be treated as an updated financial forecast.

Infrastructure Funding Needs Further Clarification

The stadium budget includes utilities, parking, lighting and access improvements. However, it remains unclear how much of the UG's estimated **$275 million in upfront infrastructure costs** that financing covers and what local government might pay. The more covered by project financing, the greater the potential local financial benefit.





Cozy Cottage, from Page **4** ↓

Kansas generally limits a single long-term-care Medicaid applicant to $2,000 in countable assets, with exemptions and protections for spouses. Its five-year look-back reviews asset transfers before application; gifts or transfers below market value can delay coverage. It does not require applicants to give away their assets.

Selling property generally converts it to cash that still counts toward the limit. Families should seek qualified advice before transferring assets and ask care providers for written rates and an explanation of what Medicaid covers.

For more information or to visit a Cozy Cottage home, call (316) 315-5735 or visit www.cozycottagesl.com.

KAUFFMAN FOUNDATION · 60TH ANNIVERSARY

Opportunity starts here and keeps moving forward.

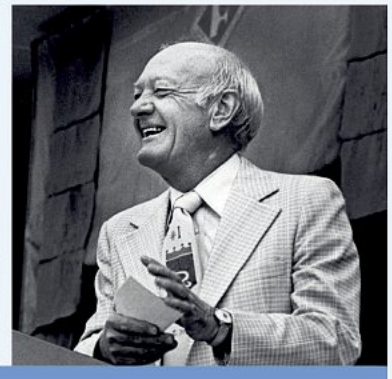


For 60 years, the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation has helped Kansas Citians turn possibility into progress by opening doors to economic opportunity and empowering people to shape their own futures.









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