



# GOVERNMENT

## Senate Leadership Introduces Legislation to Prohibit Cell Phones in K-12 Schools

Senate Majority Leader Chase Blasi (R-Andale) and Minority Leader Dinah Sykes (D-Lenexa) introduced bipartisan legislation that will prohibit cell phones in K-12 Kansas schools. Leaders from both parties came together to say the following: "Phone-free schools give students space to think, build authentic human relationships, and protect student mental health from

constant digital pressure," Senator Blasi said. "The longer phones stay in classrooms, the harder it becomes to undo the damage." Senator Sykes added, "Studies show that classrooms without phones have more engaged students leading to face-to-face conversations, stronger peer relationships, safer school environments and better academic outcomes. Kansas has world class teachers and world

class schools and we need to keep it that way and this legislation helps us do that." Senate Bill 302 is a high priority of lawmakers and is expected to pass the Senate in January, where it will be sent to the House of Representatives. The Senate has 28 co-sponsors, more than 2/3 of the Senate. The legislation impacts both public and private schools accredited by the Kansas State Department of Education.

## Commissioner's Desk



By Duane Morris  
Ottawa County Commissioner  
District #3

Please remember this is NOT an official documentation of the minutes, it is meant to be an informative synopsis of County Commissioner activities from my perspective. If you want more information on a subject I mention here I encourage you to read the full minutes of the meetings online at the Ottawa County Website <https://ks1497.cichosting.com/main/>.

Happy belated New Year! I hope the first few days of 2026 have been good to you. I'm glad to see 2025 in the rear view mirror. We had to cancel our last meeting on December 29, 2025, due to lack of quorum. There has been a "bug" going around and it caught up with several people in the courthouse.

In the January 5th meeting we discussed a contract with our tech support company for courthouse security presented by Keith Coleman, Facilities Manager. The contract will allow more extended tech support and they will monitor our facility.

Jason Gipson was appointed to the North Central Homeland Security Council since he will be our new Emergency Management Director. Marie Ballou is retiring on January 24th.

The Extension office has been moving to their building south of the courthouse. Plans are to move the Emergency

Management office to where the Extension office was located. The Human Resource Office will be moved to the old Emergency Management office. It sounds like a lot of moving, but we think it will be worth it in the long run.

Chris Smith, Public Works Director, gave an update of activities. He has a long list of projects, but he explained it takes a lot of time to get set up for bigger projects and he has to prioritize them to avoid moving equipment back and forth across the county.

Tammi Cox, County Clerk, presented two revised policies for approval regarding religious accommodations and voluntary terminations/resignations. The policies were approved as presented.

We are working to get the video tapes of the meetings done properly and posted online. It's a big job to add to the clerk's other duties and there is no room for error. It's much more complicated than we anticipated, especially when an executive session is in the mix. We might have to add a part time person to be re-

sponsible for video taping the meetings.

My goals for 2026 are to continue working for a good relationship with all employees. They are a valuable resource and I appreciate what each and every one of them do to make Ottawa County a better place. The commissioners hope to schedule joint meetings with city councils across the county to share ideas to work together for the citizens of Ottawa County. We are looking into clean energy and possibly locating a facility here. Options are a solar power farm similar to what Beloit has or a small modular reactor site through Terra Power, LLC. Maybe there other ideas out there, I would encourage readers to contact your commissioner and visit about these and other ideas. There are options developing for the Blue Store that we will explore and the museum has made improvements with many new "out of the box" ideas on the horizon as they establish the museum as a 501c3 in 2026.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve you!

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## Waterfowl Seasons

By Jordan Keil  
Why are waterfowl seasons different every year and why are the zones so weird shaped? These are both good questions that we get asked all the time. The short answer for season dates is this. Since waterfowl are migratory birds, they are regulated by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, also known as the USFWS. They tell us how many zones we can have and how many days of hunting we can offer every year. So, the process starts with them telling us what perimeters we must work within. It might sound something like "season can be open for 74 days and must close by January 31st." Then we (KDWP)

make recommendations to the commission who then votes to set the season dates. Our zones might look funny on the map, and we know that we cannot please everyone. But if you look close there is actually a method behind the madness. The low plains early zone encircles all our marshes in the middle part of the state, while the low plains late zone has all the bigger reservoirs in the middle part of the state. This is so we can open season earlier where we have marshes, and we can run season later where we have reservoirs. This allows waterfowl hunters more days to hunt than if it was just one big zone open for a set number of days. The

marshes usually freeze up first and the waterfowl that was staying on the marshes moves to the reservoirs where the big water takes longer to freeze. In some years, it has remained open all winter long. If you have more questions, please visit our website, or email me at: [jordan.keil@ks.gov](mailto:jordan.keil@ks.gov).

### STRANGE, BUT TRUE...

In 1820, Missouri imposed a \$1 bachelor tax on unmarried men ages 21-50. The short-lived law was designed to encourage marriage, population growth and family establishment in the new state.

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(First published in The Minneapolis Messenger on January 15, 2026)

IN THE DISTRICT COURT OF OTTAWA COUNTY, KANSAS

MATTHEW VILLALPANDO )  
Plaintiff, )  
vs. ) Case No. 25 CV 31  
MATTHEW DUTTON )  
ROBERT ANDERSON )  
HEARTLAND CREDIT UNION )  
CARI FRIESEN )  
KANSAS DEPARTMENT OF )  
REVENUE AND KANSAS HIGHWAY PATROL )  
Defendant )

**NOTICE OF SUIT**  
(Pursuant to K.S.A. Chapter 60-307)

THE STATE OF KANSAS TO:

Any interested party

You are hereby notified that on the 23<sup>rd</sup> day of December, 2025, a Petition to Quiet Title to Personal Property, specifically a 2014 Ford Flex SUV VIN#2FMGK5D88E07021 was filed in the District Court of Ottawa County, Kansas, by Matthew Villalpando, praying for judgment against the above-named defendant and any interested party.

You are hereby required to plead to said Petition on or before the 14<sup>th</sup> day of February, 2026, at 10:00 o'clock a.m., in said Court, at the Ottawa County Courthouse, 307 North Concord, Minneapolis, Kansas. Should you fail to plead therein, judgment and decree will be entered in due course on said Petition.

/s/ Matthew Villalpando  
Matthew Villalpando, Plaintiff

**PREPARED AND APPROVED BY:**

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*J.A. Allen*  
Attorney for Plaintiff

## Sedgwick County Man Sentenced for Insurance Fraud

Kansas Insurance Commissioner Vicki Schmidt announced a Sedgwick County man has been sentenced to 18 months of probation for insurance fraud.

Shawn Gales, age 37, pleaded guilty on December 18, 2025, in Sedgwick County District Court to one count of Fraudulent Insurance Act, a level 8 Nonperson Felony and one count of Interference with Law Enforcement. Gales fraudulently reported his dirt bike as stolen to his insurance company for a payout on the bike's loan. He pleaded guilty and was

sentenced to 18 months probation for insurance fraud. Gales was ordered to pay \$2,273.93 to Progressive Insurance and \$1,757.50 to Golden Plains Credit Union in restitution.

"Insurance fraud costs all Kansans in the form of increased premiums every year," Schmidt said. "The Department will continue pursuing penalties against anyone committing insurance fraud in Kansas."

The Kansas Department of Insurance investigated this case which was prosecuted by the Kansas Attorney General's Office.

(First published in The Minneapolis Messenger on January 1, 2026)

IN THE 28<sup>th</sup> JUDICIAL DISTRICT  
DISTRICT COURT OF Ottawa COUNTY, KANSAS

IN THE MATTER OF THE PETITION OF

Ashly JoAnn Doering Present Name Case No. OT-2025-CV-30  
Ashly JoAnn Forshaw Div. No. \_\_\_\_\_

To Change His/Her Name to:  
Ashly JoAnn Forshaw New Name \_\_\_\_\_

PURSUANT TO K.S.A. CHAPTER 60

**NOTICE OF HEARING - PUBLICATION**

THE STATE OF KANSAS TO ALL WHO ARE OR MAY BE CONCERNED:

You are hereby notified that Ashly JoAnn Doering [Petitioner's Full Name], filed a Petition in the above court on the 29<sup>th</sup> day of January 2025, requesting a judgment and order changing his/her name from Ashly JoAnn Doering to Ashly JoAnn Forshaw.

The Petition will be heard in Ottawa County District Court, 307 N Concord [Court address], Minneapolis [City], Kansas, on the 20 day of January, 2026, at 10:00 a.m. p.m.

If you have any objection to the requested name change, you are required to file a responsive pleading on or before March 1st, 2026 [Insert date at least 41 days after first publication] in this court or appear at the hearing and object to the requested name change. If you fail to act, judgment and order will be entered upon the Petition as requested by Petitioner.

Petitioner, Pro Se  
Name (Print): Ashly JoAnn Doering  
Address 1: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address 2: \_\_\_\_\_  
City, State, Zip: Minneapolis KS 67467  
Telephone Number: \_\_\_\_\_