

# Millions paid, but no fault admitted: Ex-KCPD cop was to blame in fatal shooting

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Folks, I'm torn. On one hand, I am happy for the family of Cameron Lamb, the 26-year-old Black man fatally shot by ex-Kansas City police detective Eric DeValkenaere. This week, Lamb's loved ones reached a \$4.1 million settlement in a federal

lawsuit filed against DeValkenaere, the Kansas City Police Department and its Board of Police Commissioners. In reaching this settlement, the family has some measure of financial relief. By contrast, I am equally disappointed that DeValkenaere and the KCPD were let off the hook in terms of culpability. Under terms of the agreement, neither DeValkenaere or the police agency he once worked for admitted fault related to Lamb's death. How could this be? It is a fact that DeValkenaere

fired the shots that killed Lamb in his own backyard in 2019. I get all of the legalese and by no means do I fault the victims — Lamb's three children and his parents will receive compensation, according to the settlement. It just doesn't sit right with me that this former officer and the police department have been, in a sense, cleared of any wrongdoing — because that is simply not the case. **NO DISPUTE, DEVALKENAERE IS GUILTY** In a 2021 bench trial,

Jackson County Circuit Court Judge Dale Youngs found the former policeman guilty of involuntary manslaughter and armed criminal action for killing Lamb. Youngs sentenced DeValkenaere to six years in prison. He served one year behind bars — I didn't think he'd spend even a day locked up — before then-Gov. Mike Parson granted him clemency. I will pause here to give credit to former Jackson County Prosecutor Jean Peters Baker and her office for having the courage to bring charges in

this case. As a result, DeValkenaere became the first Kansas City officer convicted of killing an unarmed Black man. And I'd be remiss if I didn't acknowledge the many civil rights groups and community leaders that pushed hard for DeValkenaere to face legal consequences for this reckless shooting. Lamb should not have been shot by a trigger-happy officer who fired within nine seconds of encountering Lamb in the backyard of a home he rented in the 4100 block of College Avenue. And let's not forget the appellate judges who upheld Youngs' verdict and the state Supreme Court judges who refused to take up a case that was decided on facts presented in the court of law.

**KCPD SUPPORTED EX-DETECTIVE** From the time Lamb was killed, this depart-

ment publicly supported a detective who a federal judge found to have violated Lamb's Fourth Amendment right against illegal search and seizure. And this same agency defended DeValkenaere every step of the legal process. To be fair, DeValkenaere deserved legal representation and to have his day in court — on taxpayers' dime, I might add. But it would be safe to assume that DeValkenaere's reprehensible actions that day have cost taxpayers well more than the millions Lamb's family settled for. Yet neither he nor the police department admitted fault for Lamb's untimely demise. Where is the justice and accountability in that? There is none. *Toriano Porter: 816-234-4779, @torianoporter*

# Mike Kehoe's reforms for Missouri schools are politics, not sound policy

BY TRISTAN SATTERLEE  
Special to The Kansas City Star

This past week, Gov. Mike Kehoe has been hard at work at putting his plan for Missouri's education system into motion, appointing new leadership to the State Board of Education. Kehoe discussed his big plans for students during his campaign, and Missourians are seeing the changes they voted for in action. The appointments, upon state Senate approval, will include Jon Otto, a corporate finance attorney and charter school advocate; Brooks Miller, a health care CEO and Michael Matousek, director of the American Trucking Associations' Government Freight Conference and former legislative director for Republican U.S. Rep. Sam Graves. Eye surgeon Tom Prater will retain his

seat on the board. These new members' stances on curriculum standards, accountability practices, school funding, teacher pay and unions are difficult to find. This low level of opacity should make it hard for Missouri voters and lawmakers to trust these individuals to align with the interests of the communities they serve, rather than the pro-privatization tendencies of the Kehoe administration. While most people might place a corporate attorney, a health care CEO, a D.C. lobbyist and an eye doctor at the beginning of a bad joke, Missouri has long been willing to entertain non-traditional voices in leadership. However, these new voices, selected specifically to reinforce Kehoe's political agenda, are not what our public schools need — especially

not now, when Missouri continues to rank in the middle of the pack for educational performance nationwide, according to World Population Review. Education policy has become a battleground for one dangerous misconception: the belief that everyone is an "expert" simply because they went to school. Teachers and administrators face intense public scrutiny, not because they're ineffective, but because we presume to know their jobs. This misplaced confidence bleeds into policymaking, where empirical best practices get tossed aside in favor of populist demands. Kehoe wants to bring education "back to basics" — focusing on math, science and reading — while promoting workforce readiness, strict discipline and parental control over curriculum. On the surface,

these goals might sound reasonable. Many parents feel unheard in decisions about controversial topics and want clearer academic outcomes. But when these priorities come at the cost of research-backed strategies such as social-emotional learning and differentiated instruction, the damage is real. **REJECTING PROVEN EDUCATIONAL TECHNIQUES** First, Kehoe's entire pitch is built on a rejection of what experts in education and psychology have spent decades trying to prove. He leans into this culture of "We've all been to school, so we must know how it should be run," and some Missourians are buying it. This argument relies on the same logic that anybody who rides in an ambulance is competent

enough to work in the emergency room. We shouldn't ask folks with absolutely no teaching or academic research experience to dictate education policy. Strategies such as trauma-informed teaching, inclusive discipline models and relational learning have been proven to increase achievement and engagement. Yet they are being sacrificed in favor of rigid discipline and test-focused instruction. Second, the kind of school reform Kehoe is promoting doesn't just harmlessly miss the mark, but actively deepens the divide between Missouri's haves and have-nots. By splitting public funds and incentivizing families to jump ship to charter or private schools, he's purposefully creating a society consisting of a wealthy ruling class and an underprivileged working class. When charter schools are propped up as the future, public schools are left underfunded, with less diverse student populations and fewer resources to meet increasingly com-

plex needs. This isn't just about education policy — it's about social engineering. Kehoe and his board are pushing our state further down the path of inequality, whether knowingly or unknowingly. The result? An education system where the rich get options and the rest get leftovers. In his 2025 inaugural address, Kehoe stated he would find people who aligned with his view for American schools, and that appears to be the current step for this administration. The people who are aligned with these views? A charter school activist, a trucking lobbyist and a health care CEO. *Tristan Satterlee is majoring in educational studies with a minor in legal studies at the University of Central Missouri. He plans on attending law school and pursuing a career in educational law and policy advocacy. He is from Osage Beach, Missouri.*

# Rich oil execs helped Trump, should confront him on tariffs

BY TOM SENG



Since President Donald Trump announced broad tariffs this month, the price of oil in the U.S. has plummeted to levels not seen since September 2022. With production at just over 13 million barrels per day, this represents a reduction in gross revenue of \$195 million per day for the oil and gas industry — not counting the precipitous drop in natural gas prices, too. It can be said with confidence that this is not what the oil billionaires who backed Trump's reelection expected to happen. During his first term, Trump — who knew very little about oil and gas — was swayed by the industry to its advantage, and producers thrived. There was every expectation for a repeat performance in his second term. The industry executives

backing Trump again were counting on looser regulations, new tax breaks and the opening up of federal lands for drilling. During his campaign last fall, Trump resurrected Sarah Palin's "Drill, baby, drill!" mantra and referred to the "liquid gold beneath our feet," a hackneyed and trite expression. Trump asked the industry for \$1 billion in campaign funding and pledged to unleash oil and gas in the U.S. Candidate Trump also promised his loyal supporters that he would reduce their energy costs by 50%, an arbitrary figure without any plan or data to support it. Needless to say, his goals for the oil industry and his promises to the average person were diametrically opposed. However, it was readily apparent that none of the oil industry CEOs pulled Trump aside and explained that they had been undertaking a disciplined approach to capital as their investors demanded after the COVID-19 pandemic. The focus for the past four

years has been on free cash flow so that debt is paid down, dividends are distributed and share buybacks can occur. All one needs to do is to read the quarterly earnings reports for publicly traded exploration and production companies: Their emphasis on generating free cash flows jumps off the pages. And since their jobs and bonus structures depend on shareholder satisfaction, you didn't see major producers substantially increasing their capital investments. We'll probably even see a reduction. Why would the industry greatly increase drilling and production activity that could lead to lower prices? So, in reality, there will be no "drill, baby, drill!" The oil and gas industry applauded the appointment of Chris Wright, the CEO of a hydrofracturing service company, to the position of U.S. secretary of energy. They would now have an advocate with a front-row seat in the new administration. How would Wright balance



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Only wealthy executives can carry the message about tariffs and other chaos.

Trump's conflicting promises to industry and the average consumer? It didn't take long for Wright to be quoted as saying the White House would like to see \$50 oil, a price level that Wright personally knows would be devastating to the oil and gas industry. And, while Wright's newly adopted view was surprising, what the industry never expected was the damage Trump would cause with his scattershot approach to increasing federal revenue via tariffs which are, by nature, inflationary despite the administration's statements to the contrary. We also know it wasn't just oil industry executives

who were backing Trump. Wall Street had a good run during Trump's first term and expected the same the second time around. Many voters, too, looked beyond Trump's history and voted with their bank accounts and stock portfolios in mind. There was a "Trump bump" right after the election, and inflation was cooling. In essence, Trump could only damage the improving economic conditions he inherited. Trump used to point to Wall Street indexes (when they were high) as a barometer of his success in office. Now, he doesn't look at them. So, the question needs to be asked: Where are all the billionaires who supported

Trump and are now seeing a domestic and global economic meltdown? By the nature of their own successes, they have a better grasp of today's worldwide economic interdependencies than Trump and are seeing the results of his erratic decision making. The irony of how much of their wealth has just been wiped out cannot be understated. Many gave him their unwavering support lest they face his wrath. But what were those fears founded upon? Did they think their wealth would shrink? What was really at stake for those who had amassed embarrassingly large wealth if they went against Trump? Whether publicly or privately, it's time for them to band together and demand a meeting with the White House to stop this madness. They helped put him in office and only they, together, can influence the direction of the U.S. economy going forward. *Tom Seng is assistant professor of professional practice in finance at the Texas Christian University Neeley School of Business and TCU's Ralph Lowe Energy Institute.*