

Chief Judge Wine: Court operations diminish during COVID-19

Chief Judge Taylor J. Wine, who presides over the Fourth Judicial District (Coffey, Anderson, Franklin and Osage counties) signed an administrative order March 8 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Fourth Judicial District has adopted the following procedures and protocols, and will monitor and make adjustments as necessary, with updates being listed on the website www.4idks.org.

The Fourth Judicial District Courts and clerk's offices remain open. The clerk's office is available to file documents and make inquiries and the public is encouraged to use the telephone or e-mail as for contact with the court.

All jury trials (civil and criminal) scheduled through May 1 are continued (postponed), pending further order of the court. All Chapter 61 actions, except evictions and garnishment hearings scheduled through May 1, are postponed. Plaintiff attorneys are ordered to obtain a new hearing date from the court and serve notice of hearing on all parties as required by law.

All other court proceedings scheduled for appearance through May 1 may be continued by the presiding Judge. Generally, the presiding Judge will attempt to hold hearings telephonically or by video conferencing when possible.

When not possible, continuances will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Any person represented by an attorney who has a hearing date set prior to May 1 is directed to contact that attorney for scheduling information, and any person without an attorney who has a hearing date set prior to May 1 is directed to contact the Clerk of the Court in the county of their hearing for scheduling information.

Any person supervised by the Fourth Judicial District Court Services Office shall report by telephone only, between now and May 1 and those persons are directed to contact their court services officer for further reporting instructions. The collection of saliva or urinalysis for drug and alcohol testing is immediately suspended until May 1.

All citation dates and bond dates shall be set for a date after May 1.

Individuals are prohibited from entering the courtroom, adjacent hallway or clerk's office if they have traveled to areas affected by COVID-19 or have been exposed to individuals with COVID-19 symptoms.

All individuals are directed to maintain six feet of separation when possible in compliance with public health recommendations.

Updates

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pick-up orders, to-go orders, drive through and delivery.

Coffey Health System - The Coffey County Hospital cafeteria closed to the public effective Tuesday, March 17.

All Coffey County offices will close at 4 p.m., beginning March 17.

God's Storehouse is open for food pickup only. The Burlington Senior Center will be closed to the public until March 30. During this time they will have home delivery for Meals on Wheels. Direct any questions to (620) 364-2730 or (620) 490-1579.

The USD 244 Recreation Center will be closed to the public until March 30. During this time all trips and programs will be canceled as well.

The Coffey County Museum is closed until March 30.

The City of Burlington asks residents to pay utility and other bills at the city hall drop-box or online.

4 Rivers Electric Cooperative closed its offices to the public through the end of March when they will re-evaluate CDC recommendations. Service representatives are available at (620) 364-2116. Members can access their accounts at 4riverselectric.com and the co-op's SmartHub mobile app.

4 Rivers Electric Cooperative canceled its annual meeting set for March 21.

The Burlington Rotary Club will not meet the remainder of March.

Burlington United Methodist Church will offer alternative methods for worship rather than gathering at the church on March 22 and 29. All face-to-face meetings at BUMC are suspended through March 29. Watch your mailbox and your emails for Pastor Kim's creative alternatives for your worship at home.

Visitation restrictions have been implemented in area nursing homes and hospitals.

All Honor Flight trips scheduled through April 30 have



Space separates chairs outside of the Coffey County Health Department Monday morning and a sign is posted for court visitors on one of the entrance doors at the Coffey County Courthouse. Photos by Mark Petterson



been postponed, including trips planned by Southern Coffey County High School and USD 252 Southern Lyon County schools.

USD 252 Honor Flight Donkey Basketball on March 20 has been postponed.

Elmendaro Township Library is closed through March 22.

Corps of Engineers offices and visitor centers at John Redmond and Melvern are closed to the public. Business can be conducted online or by telephone.

Coffey County Libraries

All branches of the Coffey County Library are closed to the public, until March 29, according to Library Administrator Darrin Daugherty. During this time, all library events and meeting room usage are cancelled and books should be returned using the outside library bins.

Requesting, picking up, and returning materials: In order to allow you to utilize the local resources, the following service has been approved from 9 a.m. to noon weekdays until the library reopens: 1. Receive requests via phone calls,

emails, the online catalog system or FaceBook messenger; 2. Have staff retrieve the materials. If need be, they could use gloves in order to protect them. Wipe down the materials. Place in a bag. Put the bag in the (a) lobby between the library inside and outside doors for Lebo, Gridley, Burlington and LeRoy Branches, (b) in the meeting room for Waverly, (c) or outside of the door for New Strawn and make sure the correct patron picks up; 3. Library staff can call patrons and let them know when their requests are ready; 4. All books will be returned using the outside library bins. There will be no courier between the branches or between other libraries during the closure.

Staff will be available at the branches via phones from 9 a.m. to noon to answer reference questions.

Patrons can still access state library resources via a Kansas based IP address via: <https://kslib.info/221/Online-Databases>. Some of these resources might require you to have a Kansas Library E-Card. Call between 9 a.m. and noon for assistance at your Coffey County Branch.

Daugherty said updates will be given if any services are added or subtracted during this time.

State Updates

Kansas Attorney General Derek Schmidt reminded state and local governments considering any remote meetings by telephone or other communications equipment that they are still required to comply with Kansas Open Meetings Act requirements.

As of March 16, access to the Kansas Statehouse is limited to individuals conducting official business. All public events at the Statehouse have been postponed until further notice.

KCC issued an emergency order suspending utility disconnects until April 15.

Atmos Energy temporarily suspended natural gas disconnections.

Kansas Wildlife, Parks and Tourism Commission canceled its March 26 meeting in Topeka.

KDHE Water and Wastewater Operator Certification Program suspended operator examinations and department sponsored classroom training until further notice. Water and wastewater operator renewal timeframes will be extended and additional examination dates will be scheduled.

Kansas Supreme Court restricts judicial center access and has canceled March oral arguments.

Kansas Department of Revenue reminds residents of online services. Residents can go to ikan.ks.gov or download the official iKan app from the Google Play Store or Apple App Store. Online government services include renewing vehicle registrations and renewing driver's licenses (available to Kansans ages 21-50 who did not use the online renewal at their most recent renewal period and are not obtaining a Real ID for the first time, or are obtaining a "Not for Federal Use" license or identification card), ordering vital records copies (birth certificates, marriage certificates, etc.) and purchasing state park passes.

Consumer Alert — Watch out for coronavirus scams

TOPEKA — Kansas Attorney General Derek Schmidt is urging consumers to use caution against scams involving COVID-19.

"In any unsettled times, whether it be the aftermath of a devastating storm or in this case the spread of a new virus, there are those who choose to take advantage of the public's apprehension and uncertainty," Schmidt said. "With all the discussion and disruption in reaction to COVID-19, Kansans should be particularly vigilant for scammers and should know that our office is here to help if needed."

Kansans should be on alert for scams related to the COVID-19 virus, more commonly

known as the coronavirus, which originated in the Wuhan province of China and has now spread to the United States. These scams could include bogus products advertised as coronavirus prevention measures or treatments as well as bogus charities purporting to raise money for coronavirus research or to support coronavirus patients. Schmidt said his office has received reports of these sorts of scams circulating in Kansas.

Any Kansans who have problems with scams may file a complaint with the attorney general's Consumer Protection Division at www.InYourCornerKansas.org or call (800) 432-2310 for more information.

KDHE

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their 14-day quarantine period, including a measured fever of 100.4 (F) or higher and lower respiratory symptoms like coughing or shortness of breath, they should contact their healthcare provider and tell them about their recent travel or other COVID-19 exposure.

Testing for COVID-19

Healthcare providers should evaluate exposure history and symptoms and call

KDHE if COVID-19 is suspected. KDHE only approves COVID-19 testing requests from healthcare providers and local health departments.

People who are currently being tested for COVID-19 should remain in home isolation, or hospital isolation if symptoms are severe enough to be hospitalized, until test results are available. If the test result is negative, isolation is no longer required. If test results are positive for COVID-19, the person must remain in isolation until released by public health.

Prevention

There is currently no vac-

ine to prevent COVID-19. The best way to prevent illness is to avoid spreading the virus and to avoid being exposed to the virus. The virus is thought to spread between people who are within about 6 feet of each other for at least 10 minutes through droplets from coughing and sneezing.

To reduce risk, everyone should:

- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60 percent alcohol.
- Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed

- hands.
- Stay home if you are sick.
- Cover coughs and sneezes.
- Clean and disinfect surfaces daily.

For more information, visit the KDHE website at www.kdheks.gov/coronavirus. KDHE has a phone bank that is staffed Monday - Friday, 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. The phone number is 1-866-534-3463 (1-866-KDHEINF). KDHE also has an email address for general inquiries, COVID-19@ks.gov. These contacts are for general questions and cannot provide you with medical evaluations. If you are feeling ill, stay home and call your healthcare provider.

Legislature moves past 'turnaround'

We left "turnaround," a time where the bills of the Senate are now moved to the House for consideration and vice versa.

Notes from the 14th

During the week of March 2, the Senate passed 58 bills. Most of the bills weren't controversial, but some were very important. I've written before about the "Sports Gaming Bill" that has implications for Eureka Downs. One bill made some funding available to the KU Cancer Center in Kansas City. This would lead to a change of status and services for KU Medical Center. They would be recognized as one of the 51 centers in the U.S. with this comprehensive designation. To achieve that status, KU Medical Center must implement and improve several aspects of their cancer services.

One tax bill that was passed by the Senate, SB 295, is interesting. This bill would limit the appraisal value of property in that real property cannot be assessed higher for normal repair and maintenance of existing property.

This week and next, the Senate committees will be trying to get work completed for the year. The week of March 23, we will be on the floor for most of the day, but right now the Senate gavels in at 2:30 p.m. each day.

On March 5, Erica Johnson brought students from Neodesha and Fredonia to

the Capitol for Kick Butts Day. The students rallied and Emily Tomlinson spoke out against smoking and vaping. Thank you all for making the trip and sharing this worthwhile message.

Congratulations to Sedan, Kan. The Kansas State Forestry Service has donated a firefighting vehicle to the City of Sedan. This is provided at no cost to the fire department of Sedan.

Keyle Faudre, Eric Krug, and Jacob Bowlin of El Dorado Middle School, served as legislative pages on Feb. 12. The students were accompanied by Assistant Principal Luke Claar.

Our last page of the session was Tayte Leck of Neodesha on Feb. 18. Tayte came to the Capitol with his family while his older brother shadowed Representative Newland. Inclement weather prohibited the last scheduled pages from attending, but we hope next year will provide another opportunity for these students.

The Capitol has seen a variety of visitors this session bringing new information and entertainment to all of us. I enjoy talking to students who come to the Capitol and sharing with them how the political process works. Kansas has many bright and talented students out there and it is a privilege to be able to help them.

Feel free to contact me at (785) 296-7678 or at bruce.givens@senate.ks.gov. It is a privilege to serve you. I'll be posting things about KPERS, banks and credit unions and many other items on my website at www.brucegivens.com.

County

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to each other. She also recommended having only one ink pen on the counter and wiping counters regularly.

Payer said her office planned to create packets of information for local businesses with information about ways they can help stop the spread of COVID-19.

Payer said the Coffey County Health Department is not a testing site for COVID-19; however, the hospital and clinic will be performing any necessary tests.

County Appraiser Connie Lawrence requested a five-minute executive session to discuss an employee reprimand under the nonelected personnel exception to Kansas Open Meetings Act. Commissioners approved the request with Lawrence and County Counselor Wade Bowie II attending the closed door session.

With the summer months approaching, Noxious Weed Director Todd Bemis requested commissioners approve two motions. They granted Bemis permission to advertise and employ two temporary seasonal laborers. Commissioners also authorized the chairman to sign the Kansas Department of Transportation's county agreement to treat noxious weeds for 2020 at designated labor rates. Bemis estimated the county will receive \$6,000 to \$8,000 as a result of the contract.

Coffey County Housing Director Ronda Gilbert requested commissioners waive landfill fees for a mobile home owned by Mat Raymer, located

at 621 N. First Street, Burlington. Commissioners approved the request.

Jarrold Ecton returned to the board meeting to resume discussion about a drainage issue east of Emmer Lane, just north of First Street in Gridley. Robert Harkrader, a private lands conservationist, and County Engineer Wayne Blackburn were also present.

Harkrader said it is possible to fix the problem without the county buying additional right of way. He said a state cost-share program could pay for 60 percent of the estimated \$2,500 cost to build additional berm and waterway. The remaining \$1,000 would be Ecton's responsibility.

Blackbourn said he does not support the county expending any road and bridge funds toward this project. The county made improvements to the road in 1996; however, no conservation work has been done on that property since then. Blackbourn said water has always come across the road. He said the county has no loss and no safety issue with the road.

Ecton has owned the property for a year and commissioners acknowledged he is willing to do something to fix the drainage problem. Commissioners directed road and bridge to place straw mats on approximately 300 feet of new water way on the east side of Emmer Lane, north of First Street in Gridley, on land owned by Jared Ecton. Blackbourn said the county's cost likely will be \$500 to \$1,000.

In his weekly report, Blackbourn said he has been working on paperwork related to the landfill. Plans are to begin moving dirt around April 1 on the construction of Cell #4. Blackbourn said many gravel

roads are in poor shape because of the weather, but that is common everywhere. He said rock is being hauled as needed.

A zoning permit was approved for Michael and Sheila Rich to build a 320 square foot accessory structure for equipment storage at 1052 Fourth Road, which is zoned A-1 Agriculture.

Payroll Benefits Coordinator Denise Humlicek received a letter from Benefit Management, who manages the county's health plan. The letter indicated cost-sharing related to COVID-19 testing will be waived. The letter outlined several other health insurance related items related to coronavirus treatment and prescription drugs.

County Clerk Angie Kirchner said the coronavirus was the main concern at a department head meeting last week. Kirchner said the courthouse janitors are implementing extra cleaning at the courthouse.

Bowie received an initial letter from McGrath Human Resources Group requesting information needed to start the comprehensive salary study process.

Bowie informed commissioners a lawsuit filed by Laura Hawkins against the county has been dismissed in federal court.

Commissioners met with Bowie in two five-minute executive sessions, both to protect privacy rights of a county employee under the nonelected personnel exception to the Kansas Open Meetings Act. No action was taken in open session.

Commissioners also:

- Authorized the Chairman to sign one tax abatement to the county tax roll in the



Bruce Givens
State Senator
14th District