

# The Record

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## Sources of Our Discontent

By Dr. Jim Haas

Travel in time with me to the 1980s when an experienced educator suggested to me that the so-called “Me Generation” of students at that time were headed for a troubled future because of their growing belief that everyone’s opinions were equally valid regardless of established facts. We have equal rights (or should), but it’s foolish to believe that we’re equally right.

Fast forward to the election year of 2016 when my wife and I witnessed a widespread denial of provable facts. We were in an Amtrak station when a fellow passenger I dubbed Alice in Wonderland was on her phone loudly explaining that the 2012 mass murder of students and teachers in Connecticut’s Sandy Hook School was a hoax perpetrated by those wanting “to take our guns.” She told her listener to check it out “on Facebook.” Clearly, we were in the presence of a conspiracist with a social media megaphone.

We knew there were ridiculous lies lurking in dark corners of the Internet—President Obama wasn’t a citizen, climate change was a hoax, the moon landings never happened—but I hadn’t come across a True Believer before. Watching Angry Alice spread online fiction to who knows how many eventual Believers was both disturbing and sad: disturbing because we were witnessing the spread of a lie and were powerless to stop it; sad because we were seeing a human being with the priceless gift of reason twisting it without evidence to satisfy her own paranoia. Surely, she was taught the habit of critical thinking in school. Apparently, she broke the habit and was a recovering thinker.



The distinguished essayist Christopher Hitchens called conspiracy theories “the exhaust fumes of democracy.” Smelly, useless, and poisonous.

We later learned that the Sandy Hook “hoax” was promoted by right-wing radio personality Alex Jones, who was sued for defamation by eight grieving families. Jones must pay more than \$965 million in damages and has declared bankruptcy. Justice.

Fast forward again to the 2020 presidential election when the losing candidate claimed—with no evidence—that his election was “stolen.” Even though 60 of 61 courts ruled that Biden won fairly (one didn’t rule because of a legal technicality), many of the loser’s followers became True

Believers in the Big Lie. Many GOP legislators who know better but are afraid of losing votes became, and remain, election deniers publicly but privately admit the election was fair.

In his 2017 book *The Death of Expertise*, Tom Nichols, professor of national security at the US Naval War College and at Harvard, writes about “the emergence of a positive *hostility*” to established facts and expert views. “This is new in American culture, and it represents the aggressive replacement of expert views or established knowledge with the insistence that every opinion on any matter is as good as every other.” This remarkable change in our public discourse “is not only unprecedented but dangerous.... Indeed, ignorance has now become hip....” But why would anyone prefer fashionable to factual?

Some good news: schools are working to make ignorance unfashionable. An award-winning government teacher at an area high school tells me that most of his students do not believe all opinions to be equally valid and that by the time they graduate, most “are at least decent at understanding credibility of sources and recognizing more reliable versus less reliable information.”

He said that challenges include competition from social media for students’ attention, lingering absenteeism since the pandemic, and, for some, “the tidal wave they get outside of school [regarding] their political socialization and the related ability to think critically about the difference between information and propaganda.” If schools overcome these challenges, our discontents will fade.



By Sharon Hoover

**H**ow would you like to become a real Mexican connoisseur without leaving KCK? The Central Avenue Business Assn. is again hosting The Flavors of Central Tour. Enjoy Mexican Cuisine at the 25 restaurants and Taquerias along Central Avenue. For tickets and info go to [www.theflavorsofcentraltour.com](http://www.theflavorsofcentraltour.com). My mouth is just watering thinking about it.

KC Farm School at Gibbs Road is hosting a first-ever farm raising

# Comin' & Goin' Turner Style

volunteer event at the Righteous Roots Community Garden, 1732 Quindaro Ave on Thursday, May 30 from 8am-4pm. They will be building a high tunnel, shed, and community sign. If you have spare time to help, please dress appropriately for the weather, wear closed toed shoes and bring gloves and water. Lunch will be provided. To learn more about the organizations involved and their mission, go to [www.kcfarmschool.org/kc-farmers-coalition](http://www.kcfarmschool.org/kc-farmers-coalition).

If you're not the outdoor type, learn how to protect your identity and assets from fraud by attending a program presented by Bank Midwest Business Banking Center Manager Ericka Benton on May 30 from 11am-12pm at the Wyandotte/Leavenworth Area Agency on Aging Center, 849 N 47<sup>th</sup> St. KCK.

Ms. Benton will guide attendees throughout the meeting and impart the best advice on identifying and preventing fraud.

While I am on the topic of fraud, the Senior Medicare Patrol is presenting a program on Medicare Insurance Fraud Prevention at the Armourdale Community Center, 730 Osage on Thursday, June 6 from 2:30pm-3:30pm. The program is from the Kansas Department for Aging & Disability Services.

On June 1, the KCK Main Library is hosting the program "Why America Needs to Embrace Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion." The presentation begins at 2pm. The speaker is Lewis Diuguid, well-known columnist, and former editor of the KC Star. For the past 40 years, individuals have begun to feel a sense of belonging. However,

DEI programs are being dismantled. Mr. Diuguid will examine why this trend is growing and what is being lost. To register at [kckpl.org](http://kckpl.org) and go to the calendar.

The KCK Public Health Dept along with the Kansas Dept of Children & Families is holding a Teen Baby Shower on May 29 from 10am-12pm at 402 State Ave. This is for females age 22 or younger who are pregnant or parenting a baby under the age of one. Safe sleep education resources and giveaways. Register in advance 913 573-6734.

For my mystery fans who like to keep guessing throughout who-done-it, try any of Freida McFadden novels. Fun fact, her main profession is brain surgery.

That's it for now. Until next time, stay safe and be kind to those around you.

## Troy Shaw Named Interim Public Works Director



KANSAS CITY, KS - On Monday, May 13, 2024, County Administrator David Johnston announced the appointment of Troy Shaw to the role of Interim Public Works Director, effective immediately. Mr. Shaw is a seasoned professional in the realm of Public Works and has served as the County Engineer for Unified Government of Wyandotte County and Kansas City, KS for the past 7 years. With over 19 years of experience as a Licensed Public Works Professional, Troy has demonstrated solid leadership skills and a track record of managing complex projects for local municipalities.

"Troy is committed to fill this role and continue to represent the best that the department has been offering our citizens," said David Johnston. "Please welcome Troy and support him with his new appointment as interim director of public works."

Mr. Shaw started his professional career in 2005 with the Unified Government as a Staff Engineer after graduating from the University of Kansas with a Bachelor of Science

in Civil Engineering. He received his professional engineering license in 2010 and a Master of Science in Engineering Management in 2018. Prior to accepting his current position of County Engineer for the Unified Government in 2017, Troy worked for the City of Lawrence where he served as a Project Engineer. This position allowed him to gain further knowledge in additional areas of engineering and leadership as well as giving him the opportunity to compare and contrast how different cities handled their commitments to their citizens.

"In the realm of Public Works, we have a responsibility to deliver infrastructure that not only meets the needs of today but anticipates the challenges of tomorrow," said Troy Shaw. "Let's build a legacy of excellence, trust and partnership that withstands the test of time."

As the County Engineer for the Unified Government, Mr. Shaw has been afforded the opportunity to not only lead the Engineering division but to serve as a member of the Public Works management team where he has been encouraged to develop, not just as an engineer, but as a leader and a person. Mr. Shaw will serve in this capacity while a search for a new director takes place.



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# SENATE NEWS



By Sen. Pat Pettey

**Congratulations, Seniors!**  
I would like to congratulate all of the graduating Seniors from the high schools in District #6. Seniors from Bishop Ward, Bonner Springs, J.C. Harmon, Turner, Wyandotte, and Sumner Academy will be entering the next exciting phase of their lives. I am proud to represent a district that provides these Seniors with so many options to further their education and achieve their life goals. Congratulations, Seniors!

### The Regular 2024 Legislative Session Ends

The Legislature convened for its final day of session for the year on the morning of Tuesday, April 30th. Over this week, we addressed a number of the governor's vetoes, lingering conference committee reports, and finalized the budget.

While we are officially adjourned, we will likely be called back to the Capitol in a few weeks for a special session to pass much-needed tax reform.

I will remain available to you for constituent services during the interim. If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to contact me at 913-579-3741 or pat.pettey@senate.ks.gov.

### Medicaid Expansion Fails

On April 26, the Senate voted on the motion to pull SB 355, the Medicaid expansion bill, out of committee. Unfortunately, this vote failed by a vote of 18-17. We needed at least 24 'Yes' votes to pass the bill out of committee.

While I'm disappointed and ashamed of my extremist Republican colleagues who blocked Medicaid expansion, I'm incredibly thankful for the thousands of Kansans who spoke up and supported this legislation over the last four months.

Together, we will continue fighting for a healthier, more

prosperous Kansas.

### A Look at Gov. Kelly's Sustained Vetoes

The Legislature attempted to override a number of the vetoes issued by Governor Laura Kelly. When the governor vetoes a bill, it returns to its chamber of origin for consideration for override. In the Senate, 27 YES votes are required to advance to the House to override the governor's veto. In the House, that number is 84.

The Senate and House sustained several of the governor's vetoes:

**\* Ban on gender-affirming care:** SB 233 bans gender-affirming healthcare for transgender youth. Access to gender-affirming care is critical for transgender youth

to live their lives fully. Denying safe medical care puts them at risk of harm, including severe depression. This bill places political gain at the expense of Kansas's most vulnerable children. Thankfully, the House sustained the governor's veto on this bill by a vote of 82 to 43.

**\* Voter Restriction:** HB 2618 requires specific intent as an element of the crime of false representation of an election official. There is no evidence of widespread voter fraud or instances of individuals impersonating election officials in Kansas. There is no reason to potentially restrict the use of federal funds for election purposes, especially when Kansas is already one of the lowest-ranking states for use

of federal funding. Restrictive voting legislation of any kind is wrong. The Senate sustained the governor's veto on this bill by a vote of 26 to 11.

**\* Fiscal Mismanagement:** HB 2036 is another tax proposal that is too expensive and risks reversing the progress we've made. We must prevent fiscal mismanagement, so we don't go back to the days of four-day school weeks, crumbling roads and bridges, and crippling debt. The cost of this bill would have put the State's ending balance in the negative by 2029. I will continue advocating for an affordable, common-sense tax plan that will provide Kansans property, social security, and

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6



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## Petty...

...from page 3

income tax relief. The Senate sustained the governor's veto on this bill by a vote of 26 to 14.

\* Drone technology: SB 271 restricts the purchase of drone technology and "critical components" – including replacement parts – from countries of concern by government agencies and law enforcement entities. While this bill is well-intentioned, it uses overly broad definitions. This would place significant burdens on government consumers, including law enforcement organizations that depend on drone technology to keep Kansans safe. The Senate sustained the governor's veto on this bill by a vote of 21 to 16.

### Veto Overrides – What Became Law

The Legislature initiated several successful veto overrides, in addition to override attempts of budget line item vetoes.

Kansans voted to protect Reproductive Freedom. Republicans Don't Care.

Kansas voters spoke loud and clear in August 2022: Kansans do not want politicians getting between doctors and their patients by interfering in private medical decisions.

Despite that, the Republican supermajority spent this legislative session undermining the will of the voters. Below are a few examples of how these extreme politicians are inserting themselves into Kansans' private decisions.

\* Invasive abortion reporting requirements: HB 2749 expands medically unnecessary and burdensome abortion reporting requirements. There is no valid medical reason to force a woman to disclose her reasoning for obtaining an abortion. This is a further attempt to stigmatize people seeking essential abortion care and is a direct intrusion on the provider-patient relationship. This legislation goes against the

will of Kansas voters. The Senate voted 27-10 to override the governor's veto on this bill.

\* Abortion Coercion: HB 2436 creates the felony crime of "coercion to obtain an abortion." While I agree that no one should be coerced into undergoing a medical procedure against their will, it is already a crime to threaten violence against another individual. In reality, this bill will prevent doctors from having an honest conversation with their patient about their pregnancy or birth control options. This bill is vague and intrudes upon private, often difficult conversations between a woman and her physician. It could have a chilling effect on physicians' willingness to engage in those conversations. The Senate voted 28-10 to override the governor's veto on this bill.

\* Anti-abortion center tax credits: HB 2465 extends tax credits for donations to anti-abortion pregnancy centers. I do not believe it is appropriate to divert taxpayer dollars to largely unregulated crisis pregnancy centers. These entities are not medical centers and do not promote evidence-based methods to prevent unplanned pregnancies. The Senate voted 29-7 to override the governor's veto on this bill.

All of these bills go against the wishes of Kansas voters who overwhelmingly signaled to politicians they should stop inserting themselves between women and their private medical decisions.

### Additional Veto Overrides

\* Rules and Regs: House Bill 2648 would insert bureaucratic red tape intended to legislatively interfere with the timely implementation of necessary and important rules and regulations. Many of these regulations are for the protection and safety of Kansans. Kansans voted against giving the legislature veto power over rules and regulations in November 2022. This bill is another attempt by the legislature to undermine the will of Kansas voters. The Senate voted 27-12 to override the governor's veto

on this bill.

\* Law Enforcement animal penalties: The death of any law enforcement animal is a tragedy. There is no question we should hold those responsible accountable for their actions. The penalties imposed for the crime created in House Bill 2583 are more severe than the potential criminal penalties for domestic violence and child abuse. While the intention of this bill is commendable, I believe this legislation needs further evaluation and study. The Senate voted 29-10 to override the governor's veto of this bill.

\* Bail Bonds: While the goal of reforming our criminal justice system in relation to pretrial release is supported, this bill establishes a minimum amount a person must pay a bail bonding company to be released from jail, regardless of the type or severity of their crime. Senate Bill 473 may have a concerning impact on low-income, non-violent offenders' ability to be released and return to their families and jobs. The Senate voted 27-12 to override the governor's veto of this bill.

### Action on the Floor

When we weren't addressing veto overrides, the Senate spent the rest of the time on the floor this week considering Conference Committee Reports (CCRs). These are formed when there are differences between the Senate and the House's versions of a bill. Once these CCRs come to the Senate floor, they are not subject to amendment. Below are a few CCRs of interest that passed this week:

\* Tax breaks for big businesses: House Bill 2096 is a mega-tax bundle with a little bit of everything, bundling big business tax breaks with property tax relief for veterans with disabilities and property tax relief for elderly homeowners. As my colleague Senator Pittman stated: We shouldn't be using our veterans as bait. Holding tax relief for disabled vets and struggling families hostage to unpopular tax policy is wrong. This bill passed by a vote

of 23 to 11 in the Senate.

\* Growing government, growing Kris Kobach's office, and growing litigation against Kansas: Sub Bill for Senate Bill 172 is Sen. Mike Thompson's bill that grows the Attorney General's office and bans foreign land purchases in Kansas, as an attempt to stop countries such as China from spying. This legislation is unconstitutional and flies in the face of private property rights. It would also open the door to more discrimination in our state. The bill passed by a vote of 24-14 in the Senate.

\* Overhauling the Kansas Wildlife and Parks Commission: House Bill 2530 makes changes to the way individuals are appointed to the Kansas Wildlife and Parks Commission. The Governor currently appoints all seven members of the Commission; this bill allows the Governor to appoint four members while the Speaker of the House, the President of the Senate, and the Attorney General each appoint one. This bill would politicize a well-functioning process. I voted no on this bill because I believe the Commission should stay apolitical and focused on providing thoughtful feedback and expert, community-driven advice. The bill passed by a vote of 21-18 in the Senate.

\* Revoked Licenses: A few years ago, the Legislature passed a law allowing individuals with a suspended driving license to apply for a restricted license to allow them to drive to work, school, church, court, and doctor appointments while maintaining car insurance and making payments on traffic fines. Senate Bill 500 builds on the success of that law by allowing individuals with a "revoked" license status to be able to join those with suspended driver's licenses in the state program. My colleague Senator Oletha Faust-Goudeau has advocated for this issue for many years, and I was proud to vote for Senate Bill 500. The bill passed by a vote of 36-1 in the Senate.

Continued in next week's issue



# Guest Editorial

## Quotes To Ponder

By Tom Valverde

Trump's own DOJ knew all of this! (All of the illegal work he was asking Michael Cohen, his personal lawyer to do so that voters would know nothing of his many adulterous affairs before the 2016 election.)... Mary Trump talks about Trump's penchant for putting people through the shredder - it's essential to anything he did! That's how we got here.

Nicole Wallace

Deadline: White House

You have to remember when Trump walked into the White House, he was a little overwhelmed. He would never admit that, but he is so worried about surrounding himself with the "right" people. Having the right people around him so that he didn't do something stupid. Well, as it turns out, that was obviously impossible. He was going to do obviously stupid things; pretty much from day one!

Claire McCaskil

Former Senator from Missouri.

The senator continues: Cohen

was the fixer of the dirty stuff. He is the guy Trump sent out to do yucky, mucky, horrible s\*\*t, and Trump didn't want that person close to him in the White House. Trump wanted to give off this aura that, "I'm now president of the United States and I have not been a serial adulterer" and I have not committed sexual assault! I don't want women to come forward and say things that needed to be 'paid off' to keep them quiet. Trump wanted to distance himself from Michael Cohen. That was no problem for Trump, Michael Cohen was expendable -- Everybody is expendable, just ask Mike Pence! There's no question, Trump cannot change his need for a Roy Cohn or a Michael Cohen or whoever is going to do his dirty work.

Nicole Wallace: The irony is Trump didn't want to pay the guy who paid the gal who had sex with him!

Testimony by Michael Cohen: Trump stated to me that he had spoken to some friendly, very smart people that told him, look, it's \$130,000, you are like a billionaire. Just pay it! There's no reason to keep this out there. So do it. And

so, Trump said to me: "just do it. Go meet with Allen Weissberg, and figure this whole thing out.

In court, the Prosecution provided a Trump organization bank statement that showed the reimbursements to Cohen written in Weissberg's hand. It shows the \$130,000 that was paid to Stormy Daniels. Weissberg together with Cohen, meet with Trump in order to discuss this very document. It was here that the crime of conspiracy to affect the outcome of the election occurred. From the start, Trump has said that he had nothing to do with Stormy Daniels and that he arranged for the National Enquirer to pay Karen McDougal, \$150,000 for her silence. With the reason that he didn't want Melania to find out and be hurt.

Trump's own lawyer, Todd Blanche asked Cohen a question that demolished Trump's reason for paying the money: Didn't you tell the government that President Trump said that he didn't think this story would hurt him? Cohen had explained that the payoffs were to protect the feelings of his wife and had nothing to do with the presidential campaign. It was long established that Michael Cohen was paid by Trump.

But, on the first day of the trial, Todd Blanche said in his opening

statement, "...you are going to learn that this was not a payback. The \$35,000 a month was not a payback to Mr. Cohen for the money he gave Ms. Daniels. The Prosecution's evidence of the bank statement with the hand writing of Allen Weissberg on it, refutes the claim made by Blanche.

The falsification of documents related to the presidential campaign was never addressed by Trump's defense lawyer. With the payments to these two women and the 34 illegal business documents, the case against the former president can have only one decision by the jury.

But, in order to be guilty, their decision must be unanimous. The first time in US history for a former president to be indicted and tried. Amazingly, he is the Republican candidate for president. Justice is coming for one man that has eluded it. The text of a Tweet sent by the former president on May 3, 2018, was placed into evidence by the Prosecution, reads as follows:

Mr. Cohen, an attorney, received a monthly retainer, not from the Campaign and nothing to do with the Campaign, from which he entered into, through reimbursement a private contract between the two parties (Trump, Cohen), known as a non-disclosure agreement, or NDA..."

## Storm season insurance claims cost \$442 million in 2023



Topeka, Kan. — Kansas Insurance Commissioner Vicki Schmidt, today, released data on the amount paid by insurance companies for Kansas storm damage claims in 2023.

"The Kansas Department of

Insurance collects this data yearly to better understand the impact of storm events across Kansas," said Schmidt. "This data is important to help the Department monitor

trends in the marketplace."

In 2023, storm claims totaled 147,710 and the amount paid out on those claims by insurance companies was \$442,822,099.11.

The Department collected the data from all companies writing

property and casualty insurance in Kansas. This data includes the number of total claims as well as the amount paid for those claims across several types of storm losses including hail, wind, water damage, and other weather-related claim losses for homeowner and automobile policies.

Johnson County saw the highest amount while Greeley County saw the lowest. A county-by-county breakdown of the data can be found on the Department's website at [insurance.ks.gov/documents/department/publications/Storm-Claim-Losses-by-County.pdf](https://insurance.ks.gov/documents/department/publications/Storm-Claim-Losses-by-County.pdf).

This storm season, if you are If you or someone you know is having trouble with an insurance claim, please contact the Kan-

sas Department of Insurance's Consumer Assistance Division toll-free at 1-800-432-2484, by email at [kdoi.complaints@ks.gov](mailto:kdoi.complaints@ks.gov) or online at [insurance.kansas.gov](https://insurance.kansas.gov) for any claims-related questions or concerns.

The Kansas Department of Insurance was established in 1871, currently led by Commissioner Vicki

Schmidt. The mission of the Department is to regulate companies that sell policies in Kansas to ensure solvency and compliance with state law, educate consumers about all things insurance and securities, and advocate for a strong and competitive market to give Kansans choices when shopping for products that meet their needs.



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MEAL SERVED at 12:00

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**BUFFET:** Fried & Oven Roasted Chicken, Shredded BBQ Brisket, 4 sides, roll, dessert & beverages (iced tea, coffee & water). **(ABSOLUTELY No Food or Beverages can be brought into the Reunion Event!)**

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