State News

Who's running to represent Kansas in the U.S. Senate in 2026? Here's a guide to the candidates

BY ZANE IRWIN
Kansas News Service

Voters in Kansas City, Kansas, showing up at the Wyandotte County Election office for the last minutes of early voting on Nov. 7, 2022.
Carlos Moreno | Kansas News Service

Democratic political outsiders are vying to unseat Kansas Sen. Roger Marshall — and end nearly a century of Republican control of the state's U.S. Senate seats.

A Democrat has not represented Kansas in the U.S. Senate since before the original Wizard of Oz film played in theaters.

Ever since Democratic Sen. George McGill left his seat in January of 1939, Kansas Republicans have enjoyed an 86-year run in the upper chamber of Congress.

Ahead of the 2026 elections, five Democratic candidates have filed to challenge first-term Republican Sen. Roger Marshall.

Oddsmakers favor Republicans to retain their majority in the Senate. But Democrats hope enough popular dissatisfaction with the current presidential administration might damage Republicans' electoral chances in Congress.

Primary elections are on Aug. 4, 2026. Voters will decide the next governor of Kansas — as well as a U.S. senator, state attorney general, state insurance commissioner, secretary of state and state treasurer — on Nov. 3, 2026.

REPUBLICAN CANDIDATES

Roger Marshall, Republican

• Political experience: Marshall, in Great Bend, assumed office as Kansas' junior senator in 2021. Previously, he served one term as the U.S. Representative for the state's "Big First" rural district encompassing much of western and central Kansas.

• What else? Marshall is a former OB-GYN. He also served in the U.S. Army Reserve for seven years.

• Platform: The former physician has taken strong stances against expanded abortion access and mask mandates during the COVID-19 pandemic. He was one of six Republican senators who objected to the 2020 electoral count based on unsubstantiated claims of widespread voter fraud — after rioters descended on the capitol and disrupted proceedings. Most recently, the senator proposed a "Marshall" plan to address rising health care costs. Instead of extending enhanced premium tax credits for three years, as Democrats had demanded during the government shutdown, Marshall proposed extending the credits for one year and then replacing them with health savings accounts. Congress did not end up extending the subsidies at all.

DEMOCRATIC CANDIDATES

Christy Davis, Democrat

• Political experience: Davis, in Cottonwood Falls, served as the Kansas director for USDA rural development under former President Joe Biden. She was also on the board of the Chase County Chamber of Commerce and led the Symphony in the Flint Hills.

• What else? Davis ran for Kansas' 1st Congressional District in 2020.

• Platform: Davis says President Trump's tariffs are causing instability for farmers and rural communities. On immigration, Davis' website says she will "fight for immigration reform that provides a pathway to citizenship and ends inhumane policies that terrorize families and unconstitutionally deprive Kansans of due process."

Anne Parelkar, Democrat

• Political experience: Parelkar, in Overland Park, has never run for public office.

• What else? Parelkar has worked as an immigration attorney. She's admitted to practice law in Kansas, Missouri and Arkansas, where she grew up.

• Platform: In an email, Parelkar said she wants to create "a single consolidated program" to provide health care to people under 18, rather than relying on a patchwork of options like Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program, or CHIP. She said that would simplify coverage and ensure children have health care access regardless of family circumstances. Parelkar also would like to pass stronger antitrust and consumer protection laws.

Erik Murray, Democrat

• Political experience: Murray, in Kansas City, Kansas, is a commercial real estate developer. He has never run for public office.

• What else? The Unified Government of Wyandotte County and Kansas City, Kansas, recently chose Murray's firm to lead a billion-dollar project to redevelop the site of the former Indian Springs mall.

• Platform: If elected, Murray's website says he would focus on lowering costs for starting and running small businesses. He told the Kansas City Star that he supports federal policies like the Opportunity Zones program, which provides tax incentives for investments in economically distressed areas.

Michael Soetaert, Democrat

• Political experience: Soetaert was, until recently, a city council member in Wellington. For years, the former Republican has run for various local, state and federal offices.

• What else? Soetaert grew up in Spring Hill, Kansas.

• Platform: Soetaert told the Hutchinson News in 2019 that he was a conservative, pro-life candidate. His website says he changed his mind on the issue of abortion after "Kansans voted for bodily autonomy." Soetaert supported the Respect for Marriage Act in 2022, which shored up some protections for gay marriage in case the U.S. Supreme Court overturns its 2015 decision establishing the right.

Sandy Spidel Neumann, Democrat

• Political experience: Spidel Neumann, in Mission, has not held public office. Records show she has made over 120 donations to Democratic candidates and organizations, including a recent $5,000 donation to the Kansas Democratic Party.

• What else? She recently retired after over 20 years as a financial services executive at Ameriprise.

• Platform: On health care, Spidel Neumann says she "supports reinstating Medicaid funding, extending funding for ACA subsidies, keeping the government out of women's healthcare decisions, and fighting pharmaceutical companies to reduce arbitrary and escalating drug prices." She says she opposes cuts to funding for veterans' mental health and other services.

Farm & Home

KDA reminds poultry owners of HPAI risk

Over the last three years, an ongoing outbreak of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) has threatened poultry flocks in Kansas and across the nation, primarily spread by wild waterfowl. The fall again brought a resurgence of the virus detected in wild birds across the state, and this month several backyard poultry flocks in Kansas were confirmed with cases of HPAI.

The Kansas Department of Agriculture reminds poultry owners that the threat of exposure to susceptible birds in Kansas is high. Anyone involved with poultry production, from the small backyard chicken owner to the large commercial producer, should review their biosecurity activities to assure the health of their birds. Find guidance on biosecurity measures to protect your birds from the spread of HPAI on the KDA Division of Animal Health webpage at agriculture.ks.gov/AvianInfluenza.

This virus is primarily being transmitted by wild waterfowl such as ducks and geese which are migrating through this region. The best thing poultry owners can do to protect their birds is to eliminate possible exposure to wild migratory birds and their habitat. This can take many forms, including cleaning your boots/clothing after walking near ponds and lakes populated with wild birds, keeping your poultry in an enclosure which wild birds can't enter, and staying away from sick or dead wild birds.

Highly pathogenic avian influenza is a highly contagious viral disease that can infect chickens, gamebirds, turkeys, and other birds and can cause severe illness and/or sudden death in infected birds. This outbreak has seen illness and mortality in a wider scope of bird species than past outbreaks, including wild and domestic waterfowl. Attentively monitor your birds for symptoms of HPAI which include: coughing, sneezing, nasal discharge, and other signs of respiratory distress; lack of energy and appetite; decreased water consumption; decreased egg production and/or soft-shelled, misshapen eggs; incoordination; and diarrhea. Avian influenza can also cause sudden death in birds even if they aren't showing other symptoms.

If these symptoms are observed in your birds, immediately contact your veterinarian. If you don't have a regular veterinarian, contact KDA's Division of Animal Health office toll-free at 833-765-2006.

HPAI is not a food safety concern; birds and eggs from infected flocks do not enter the food system. As a reminder, the proper handling and cooking of all poultry and eggs to an internal temperature of 165 ˚F is recommended as a general food safety precaution. According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the public health risk for HPAI is low.

As part of existing avian influenza response plans, federal and state partners are working jointly on additional surveillance and testing in areas around the affected flocks. The United States has the strongest avian influenza surveillance program in the world, and USDA is working with its partners to actively look for the disease in commercial poultry operations and live bird markets and in migratory wild bird populations.

For more information about HPAI, including current status of the confirmed cases as well as more information about biosecurity for your flock, go to KDA's avian influenza webpage at agriculture.ks.gov/AvianInfluenza or call KDA at 833-765-2006.

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AA MEETINGS; 213 W. Oak; Independence; Noon Wednesday, Saturday & Sunday; Wednesday at 7pm. Thursday at 7pm; Sunday at 6pm. Alanon meetings; Tuesday at 7pm TF

151 Services

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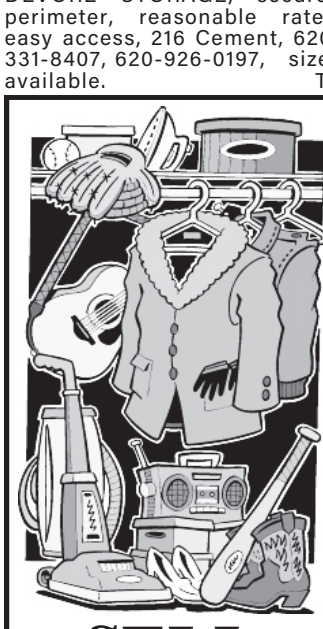

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