

Kansas House speaker launches campaign for insurance commissioner

BY ANNA KAMINSKI
Kansas Reflector

TOPEKA

Longtime Republican legislator Dan Hawkins declared Tuesday his intention to run for Kansas insurance commissioner in an announcement laced with pro-Trump sentiments.

Hawkins, an insurance agent from Wichita, followed the announcement with an event in downtown Topeka attended by fellow legislators, government officials and lobbyists, the early supporters of a nearly two-year campaign. He is the first candidate for insurance commissioner to announce he will seek the office in 2026.

“As I considered my next steps and how I can continue to serve my fellow Kansans, it became clear that my decades of experience helping individuals and small businesses navigate the complexities of the insurance industry could be especially beneficial to people across the state,” he said in a statement.

Hawkins, 64, was first elected to the House in



ANNA KAMINSKI | Kansas Reflector

House Speaker Dan Hawkins, a Wichita Republican, announced his run for state insurance commissioner on Tuesday. He followed that with a fundraising event in Topeka.

2012, and he has served as House speaker, the chamber’s top leadership position, since 2023. During the most recent legislative session, Hawkins led a supermajority of House Republicans who were set on enacting conservative legislation. They successfully overrode a flurry of vetoes by Democratic Gov. Laura Kelly.

Hawkins is a husband, father and grandfather. He is a graduate of Emporia State University and a

veteran of the Kansas National Guard, and he has been in the insurance business for three decades, specializing in employee benefits. While in public office, Hawkins has been a staunch opponent of Medicaid expansion, the state-level process that would allow low-income adults to be covered under the public insurance program.

His campaign for insurance commissioner is rooted in conservative

Republican values. The first words that appear on his campaign website are: “PRO-LIFE. PRO-GUN. PRO-TRUMP.” He characterized the hallmark of his time as House speaker as leading “the charge to stop Laura Kelly’s radically liberal agenda.”

Hawkins will seek the GOP nomination in the 2026 primary. His current term as a legislator expires at the end of 2026.

The insurance commissioner oversees the Kansas

Insurance Department, which regulates insurance companies that operate in the state. Hawkins said creating a “competitive insurance environment” in Kansas would be his objective if elected. He believes deregulation would increase consumers’ options, lower costs and make insurance issues easier to navigate.

“No Kansan should be denied coverage,” he said. “Just like President Trump has made it his mission to make life miserable for foreign cartels, it will be my job as insurance commissioner to do the same for any insurance company that does not follow the law.”

In a statement of substantial interest filed April 22, Hawkins reported that he receives commissions from six insurance companies, ranging from medical to dental to life insurance. He is on the payroll at his own insurance agency, the Hawkins Group, and at Conrade Insurance Group, which is based in Newton.

Mary Jean Eisenhower, granddaughter of former President Dwight D. Eisenhower, is Hawkins’ campaign treasurer.

“One only needs to talk with Dan for a few minutes to see his love for our state and its people,” Eisenhower said in a statement. “The insurance industry can be very complex and confusing and it’s important that Kansans have an advocate in the insurance department.”

Hawkins’ announcement is the latest in a trickle of candidacy declarations. Current Insurance Commissioner Vicki Schmidt hasn’t said whether she will seek a third term. She is expected to join a crowded governor’s race.

Most recently, former Gov. Jeff Colyer, who filled former Gov. Sam Brownback’s position in 2018 after Brownback left for a post in the first Trump administration, filed paperwork assigning a treasurer to a gubernatorial campaign but hasn’t made a formal announcement.

Kansas Secretary of State Scott Schwab and conservative podcaster Doug Billings have also declared intentions to run as Republicans. Senate President Ty Masterson, a Republican, and Lt. Gov. David Toland, a Democrat, also are widely expected to run for governor.

This story first appeared on Kansas Reflector, a nonpartisan, nonprofit news organization covering state government, politics and policy.



Courtesy photo

The Fenway Goods & Gifts pop-up store at Bradley Fair has quickly become known for its holiday decor, and it will be in the center at 21st and North Rock Road at least through Christmas this year.

Bradley Fair pop-up store will continue popping up for the rest of the year

BY CARRIE RENGERS
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When Lynne Bischoff opened Fenway Goods & Gifts at Bradley Fair this time last year, she said the pop-up store would remain open at least through the end-of-the-year holidays.

She’s now made a deal to stay at least through the holidays this year.

“People absolutely love it,” Bischoff said. “The feedback couldn’t . . . be more wonderful.”

Previously, she described the store as “a curated collection of everything I love.”

That includes gourmet food, women’s apparel, jewelry, seasonal decor, purses, natural bath products, furniture and outdoor entertaining items.

The store also has floral decor, and customers can bring in their own vases to experiment with what looks best in them with help from store representatives.

Bischoff said she’s brought in a lot of products and brands not regularly available in Wichita.

She said artwork does well at the store, which is where Williams-Sonoma used to be. The store has a little less furniture than it started with because it wasn’t selling as well.

Fenway’s sales have been up and down depending on the time of year, Bischoff said.

“We had an amazing Christmas. We do go all out for Christmas.”

The store is named for Fenway Park in Boston, the city where Bischoff went to college. Her school, at 400 Fenway, was close to the stadium.

Bischoff and her husband are former East Coast residents who lived in Tulsa for 24 years where they had a similar business. They moved to Wichita a few years ago to be close to their daughter and her family.

As much as people seem to enjoy Fenway, Bischoff said she’s equally excited to remain a pop-up destination.

“We love being there.”

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Supreme Court hears arguments in birthright citizenship case

BY DAVID CATANESE
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WASHINGTON

The Supreme Court on Thursday probed the Trump administration’s pursuit to end birthright citizenship by asking justices to limit the reach of lower court judicial injunctions.

The arguments in Donald J. Trump v. CASA, et al. stem from an executive order seeking to stop granting citizenship to children born in the United States to non-citizen parents. While the constitutionality of the order is not at the heart of this case, the justices’ questions touched on both procedural and substantive aspects of the debate, which could reshape the balance of power between the branches of government.

A ruling is expected by early July.

Here are some takeaways from Thursday’s hearing.

NATIONWIDE INJUNCTIONS EARN SCRUTINY

Conservative justices questioned the breadth of nationwide injunctions, asking whether a single district judge should wield the power to halt a federal policy across the entire country, as many have during the early months of the second Trump administration.

Multiple district courts issued nationwide injunctions blocking the implementation of Trump’s executive order on birthright citizenship, leading to a string of appeals and the current Supreme Court review. The Trump administration has been hobbled by a proliferation of such injunctions during the first four months of its term,

and they need benefits ... we have to do citizenship verifications, which is a burden for us,” said Jeremy Feigenbaum, New Jersey’s solicitor general. “It will undermine the administration of our benefits programs.”

Liberal justices repeatedly raised doubts about the feasibility of enforcing immigration and citizenship laws if some states can rescind birthright citizenship.

“Are we really going to have a situation where a child born in Texas is a citizen, but one born in Arizona is not?,” asked Justice Elena Kagan.

Kelsi Corkran, an attorney for immigrant rights organizations, argued that justices could choose a middle ground: Allowing for universal injunctions only when a fundamental constitutional right is being challenged.

ALLOWING SOME STATES TO RESTRICT BIRTHRIGHT CITIZENSHIP COULD PROVE CHAOTIC

The states and groups challenging the Trump administration stressed that limiting injunctions to only those who bring lawsuits would result in a confusing and unjust system where a child’s citizenship status could depend on their location by a few miles.

What’s more, they argued, is that if the court chooses to limit relief to a plaintiff in New Jersey, the state would still be overburdened by the fallout in neighboring states.

“In New Jersey, we have 6,000 babies born out of state every year. When they come into the state

and they need benefits ... we have to do citizenship verifications, which is a burden for us,” said Jeremy Feigenbaum, New Jersey’s solicitor general. “It will undermine the administration of our benefits programs.”

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ROBERTS, BARRETT AND GORSUCH ARE SEEN AS KEY SWING VOTES

Two conservative justices — John Roberts and Amy Coney Barrett — are seen by veteran court observers as the most likely swing votes in the birthright citizenship case.

Both have previously prioritized long-term legitimacy and stability of the court over rigid ideological outcomes.

The high court’s three-person, all-female liberal wing is expected to support maintaining nationwide injunctions in cases impacting fundamental rights, likely leaving Roberts and Barrett with a decision of whether to break from their conservative colleagues on the 14th Amendment.

Barrett, who at one point defended Kagan’s line of questioning, grilled the

Trump administration’s solicitor general on following judicial precedent.

“You’re saying you would respect the judgment, but not necessarily the opinion of a lower court?,” Barrett asked Solicitor General Dean John Sauer.

Sauer said that doing so was not a “categorical practice.”

“This could be a nail-biter,” posted law professor and legal analyst Jonathan Turley. “I think that the administration still has an advantage in curtailing universal injunctions. However, I did not come away with the sense of a lock with a majority, particularly given Barrett’s questions.”

Turley also said he was unsure how to evaluate where Roberts and Justice Neil Gorsuch stand based on their lines of questioning.

THE SUPREMES MOSTLY SIDESTEPED THE CORE ISSUE – FOR NOW

While the media’s glare is on birthright citizenship, the justices carefully avoided a direct judgment on the 14th Amendment’s Citizenship clause on Thursday.

Instead, they framed the case around the technical – but consequential – issue of judicial remedies and their scope.

That concerted restraint among the justices signaled the court’s strategic posture: settling process before principle, and possibly setting the stage for a future, higher-stakes showdown over who is entitled to U.S. citizenship by birth.

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The Wichita Eagle (ISSN 10463127) is published three times a week, Wednesday, Friday and Sunday by Wichita Eagle and McClatchy Co., 301 N. Main, Suite 1550, Wichita, KS 67202-2830 (by appointment only)
Periodicals Postage Paid at Wichita, KS (USPS 12050)
Postmaster: Send all UAA to CFS : NON-POSTAL & MILITARY FACILITIES: send address corrections to McClatchy 1601 Alhambra Blvd Suite 100 Sacramento, CA 95816.
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