

Investing in Your Child’s Future Starts with a Simple First Step

BY STEVEN JOHNSON
Kansas State Treasurer

►► Welcoming a new baby is one of life’s most hopeful moments, filled with endless possibilities. It’s also a natural time to start thinking about that child’s future, and right now there has never been a better time to do it. Across Kansas, new federally supported child investment accounts are sparking fresh conversation about how families can save for their children, and the opportunities available today are more accessible than many parents and grandparents realize.

This summer, my office is reaching out to Kansas families with a simple message: you don’t need to be a financial expert to start building a brighter future for your child. Education remains one of the most significant investments a family will make, and education looks different for every child. Whether next steps include college, trade school, apprenticeships, workforce certifications or whatever path your child chooses, there’s a way to start saving for it now.

Investing for a child’s future can sound complicated, but it doesn’t have to be. My office is focused on making sure every Kansas family knows about the financial incentives and savings opportunities available to newborns and children today. Eligible families may qualify for seed funds and other programs designed to give kids a head start on a strong financial future, often with just a few minutes to open an account.

Here are three great ways Kansas families can start investing in their child’s future today.

Quest529 Plan
The Quest529 Education Savings Account is a tax-advantaged savings tool built specifically for a child’s future education expenses. Unlike general-purpose investment

accounts, Quest529 was designed from the ground up for education savings, offering tax advantages, flexible investment options and one of the lowest fee structures in the nation. Learn more at Quest529.com

ABLE Savings Accounts
Few tools deliver more impact than the ABLE Savings Account. It is simply the best tax-advantaged savings tool for many individuals living with a disability. Right now, a \$100 ABLE Empowerment Grant is available to all Kansans who complete a 30-minute course on how the accounts can help individuals living with a disability build greater financial independence. Information on ABLE accounts and available courses can be found at Kansasstatetreasurer.ks.gov

Trump Account Grant
The Trump (530A) Account is a tax-deferred savings tool designed to give children a jumpstart on retirement or other savings. For all children born between 2025 and 2028, the federal government is offering a \$1,000 contribution into a Trump Account – seed funding that families can claim by filing IRS Form 4547 at TrumpAccounts.gov.

As families consider new ways to invest in their children’s futures, starting early remains one of the most effective strategies available. Even modest monthly contributions can add up over time and meaningfully reduce a family’s reliance on student borrowing down the road. The truth is, you don’t need a large sum of money or a finance degree to get started. You just need to take the first step.

That first step is simple. Visit treasurer.ks.gov today to explore which program fits your family, or share this information with a parent, grandparent or anyone you know who is starting a family. The earlier we start, the more options our children will have tomorrow. Let’s give every Kansas child the strongest possible start – starting now.

New Kansas law restricts handheld phone use in active school, construction zones

BY PHILIP STEVENS
HOMETOWN GIRARD

►► Kansas drivers are now prohibited from using handheld mobile devices while traveling through active school zones and highway construction zones under a new state law that took effect July 1.

House Substitute for Senate Bill 366, signed into law this spring by Gov. Laura Kelly, is intended to reduce distracted driving in areas where motorists are more likely to encounter children, pedestrians and highway workers.

The restriction applies only when the zones are active.

In a school zone, the law is in effect when the posted reduced speed limit is being enforced. The applicable times may vary by location, so

drivers should watch for posted signs and flashing school-zone signals.

A construction zone is considered active when workers are present and signs posted at the beginning of the work zone alert drivers that work is underway.

Drivers may continue using phones and other mobile devices in hands-free mode, including through Bluetooth, voice commands or a mounted device. The new restriction specifically prohibits holding or manually operating a mobile telephone while driving through an active zone.

The law includes a one-year educational period before monetary penalties begin.

From July 1, 2026, through June 30, 2027, law enforcement officers will issue warning citations to

drivers found violating the new restriction. Beginning July 1, 2027, violations will carry a \$60 fine.

The phased implementation is intended to give motorists time to learn the new requirements and change their driving habits before financial penalties take effect.

The legislation passed with bipartisan support, receiving a 116-7 vote in the Kansas House and a 31-9 vote in the Senate.

In addition to regulating handheld mobile-device use, the law changes the types of warning lights permitted on highway construction and maintenance equipment.

Construction and maintenance vehicles may now display green lights in addition to the amber and white lights already permitted. Stationary

trailers in highway construction zones may display blue lights between sunset and sunrise when workers are present.

The additional lighting options are intended to make construction vehicles and equipment more visible, particularly during nighttime work, and to give drivers clearer notice that they are approaching an active work area.

With local construction underway and schools preparing to reopen in the coming weeks, transportation officials are reminding motorists to watch posted signs, slow down and put handheld devices away when entering active school and work zones.

Local businesses prepare for back-to-school shopping block party on the Square

BY PHILIP STEVENS
HOMETOWN GIRARD

►► Businesses located in the Blair buildings on the northeast side of the Girard Square will come together on Thursday August 6th for a Back-to-School Block Party shopping event. It will feature local retailers, food, beauty and wellness services, embroidery and a school supply donation drive.

The event will include businesses housed

in The Long Branch office suites, Salon 214, ScottCo and Boutique, and The Gathering Spot. Organizers said the block party is intended to help parents, teachers and other community members prepare for the beginning of a new school year while supporting local businesses.

Activities are expected to include back-to-school apparel and accessories, boutique shopping, permanent

jewelry, food and drinks, wellness and beauty services, local vendors and special promotions throughout the block.

Embroidery stations will also be available for backpacks and school bags, along with an embroidery bar for teacher and parent tote bags.

Participating businesses and vendors announced so far include ScottCo LLC, Scott & Company Boutique, Salon 214, The Long Branch, Blissful Aesthetics

& Wellness, B3 Beauty Salon, Butter & Barley, Johnny O’s and Inkspire Works. Additional vendors may also participate.

Those attending are encouraged to bring school supplies to donate. Participating businesses will offer special discounts in exchange for donated supplies.

Organizers said a limited number of vendor spaces remain available for businesses interested in participating.



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- **Sponsored Benny’s Bill** to increase severity levels and penalties for the charges of of child endangerment and aggravated child endangerment when the victim is younger than six.
- **Cosponsor of HB 2444** which clarifies that when a defendant receives consecutive sentences, the same period of jail credit cannot be applied to more than one case.
- **Sponsored HB 2238** in 2021 which enables libraries to accept monetary donations greater than \$500,000. This bill has recently benefited our district and will benefit communities in the future.



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OP-ED

Vote Yes and let us choose

BY DANE HICKS
KPA Content Sharing

►► For those of us who vote regularly and even those who don’t, it’s more than just a little insulting to be told by the elitists in the Kansas judicial selection system that we’re not smart enough to vote for the state’s supreme court justices.

That’s a sentiment that is resounding throughout the current run-up to the August 4 primary vote which, if you vote “Yes,” will grant us that right. And we should indeed all vote “Yes.”

Kansas voters elect the governor, attorney general, legislators, sheriffs, county commissioners, school board members and many district court judges. Yet when it comes to the state Supreme Court, the legal establishment tells ordinary citizens we don’t have what it takes.

What breathtaking arrogance.

Under the present system, a nine-member commission selects three finalists from whom the governor makes an appointment. Five commission members – a controlling majority – are lawyers elected by other lawyers. The remaining four are nonlawyers appointed by the governor. The official ballot explanation itself acknowledges that the commission has a lawyer majority.

That’s not government by the people. It’s government by a bunch of lawyers.

The commission’s defenders call this “merit selection,” as though merit can be determined only by attorneys meeting among themselves. The fallacy is the belief that this commission removed politics from the selection process. Poppycock. It merely moves the politics away from the voters and into a smaller, more exclusive room.

Candidates still have philosophies. Lawyers still have ideological preferences. Governors still have political interests. Organized groups still lobby, campaign and attempt to shape public policy. The notion that politics magically disappears because the public is excluded is simply ridiculous.

The politics remain. Only the accountability disappears.

The Aug. 4 constitutional amendment would abolish the lawyer-dominated commission and give Kansas citizens the right to elect Supreme Court justices to staggered six-year terms. The first elections would occur in 2028, with additional positions elected in 2030 and 2032.

Opponents say judicial elections could attract campaign money and outside interests. There’s some credence to concern – not that it seems to bother many of those opponents when considering the election of other offices – but it is hardly

a defense of the present insider system. Special interests don’t cease to exist merely because influence is exercised through governors, attorneys, professional associations and nominating commissioners instead of campaign advertisements.

At least campaign activity can be disclosed. Contributions can be reported. Candidates can be questioned. Voters can compare records and philosophies. Kansas already regulates campaign contributions for elected judges, and the Kansas Code of Judicial Conduct requires judicial candidates to comply with contribution and disclosure laws. It also warns that contributions can create grounds for removal. Those protections can be strengthened as the Legislature sets the rules.

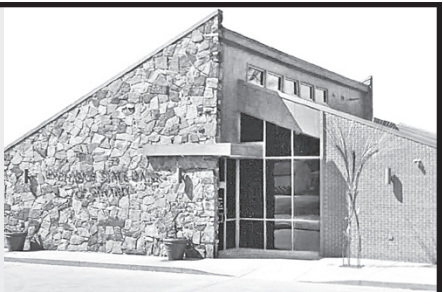
Gubernatorial and legislative campaigns also attract donors, advertisements and interest groups, but no one seriously suggests abolishing those elections and allowing lawyers to choose those candidates because they’re so much smarter than we are.

The Supreme Court belongs to Kansas – not the Kansas bar, not the governor and not a collection of political insiders hiding behind what they determine is “merit.”

Don’t insult us and don’t gaslight us. Vote “Yes,” and let us choose.

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