

KANSAS KONTACT



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**Jill Elmers Named
Woman of Impact**

**KFU 2024 Annual Convention
set for Nov. 20-21 in Lawrence**

Contact Going Fully Digital

2023 Convention Recap

2024 Legislative Update



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Cover: Jill Elmers stands inside a hoop house at her farm, Moon on the Meadow, near Lawrence, KS. Photo taken by Steven Hertzog, Lawrence Business Magazine.

The Leadership

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Matt Ubel - Vice President
Jack Geiger - Treasurer

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Amanda Lindahl - Kansas City
Jill Elmers - Lawrence

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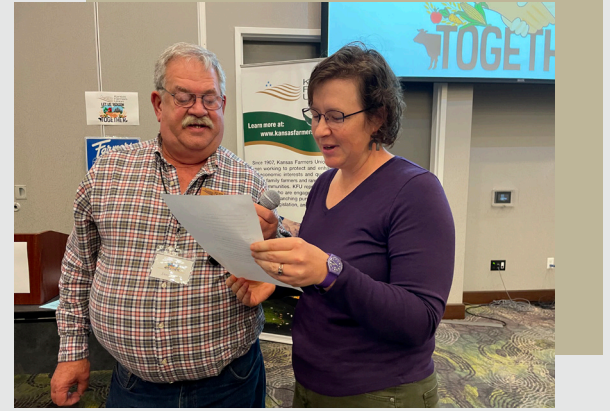
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Nick Levendofsky- Executive Director
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Kami VanCampen- Office Manager



Amanda Lindahl Elected to KFU Board of Directors

KFU President Donn Teske gives the oath of office to newly-elected North District board member Amanda Lindahl of Kansas City, KS. Lindahl has been growing food and community in the Kansas City metro for more than a decade supporting community and school gardens, orchards, and urban farmers. Her passion for local food has led her to a role supporting capacity building for local food systems across the state of Kansas. Amanda is also currently transitioning efforts from urban food production back to her rural roots in Dickinson County where she is working to take over stewardship of the 5th generation family farm. As a beginning land steward, Amanda is eager to learn from others, incorporating regenerative land management practices and agroforestry techniques.

Upcoming Events

Salina Area Farm Tours
June 24

2024 Kansas Farmers Union 117th Annual Convention

Nov. 20-21 at the SpringHill Suites in Lawrence, Kansas

A farmer training session will take place the day following convention, Nov. 22, in the same location. More details will be posted on the Events page at www.KansasFarmersUnion.org.

We're Going Digital...

This will be the last printed edition of the Kansas Kontakt before we go digital. Future newsletters will be viewed at www.KansasFarmersUnion.org. If you'd like to continue receiving a print version of the newsletter, mark your mailing preferences by filling out the included insert and mail it back to the KFU office or email nick@kansasfarmersunion.org.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

By Donn Teske

The KFU convention in November really went great. Great speakers, it went so smoothly. It was friendly & comfortable & such an upbeat atmosphere, it was fun! Nick deserves high kudos pulling it off. He really did great.

But what really stands out with this past convention is that Nick started beating the bushes and scraped together enough sponsorships to pay the expenses we usually absorb of the convention! I can't stress enough how big of a deal that is for a non-profit organization who pretty much lives hand-to-mouth. That is a talent that I lack and always have, the simple ask. Nick is great at it. Not since our Vernon Deines days have we had convention sponsorships at this level.

Vernon was a tiger going after sponsorships and memberships. A shining example of how demanding Vernon was, when he knew he was dying of cancer, he made the funeral home that was going to bury him buy a membership in Kansas Farmers Union before he would agree to use them!

We have a lot to be proud of as the Kansas Farmers Union. We have truly grassroots policy, and policy I am so proud of, that champions family farms. We do networking and education for our membership. We represent our membership in Topeka and in DC. And we do all of this with very limited resources and income.

The life of a non-profit...

On another note, the High Plains Ponderosa Dairy in Meade County has applied to the KDHE for a permit to expand their dairy to 107,000 animal units. (Kansas Permit No.: A-CIME-D001 Federal Permit No.: KS0096474 Public Notice No. KS-AG-24-006/008)
ONE HUNDRED AND SEVEN THOUSAND ANIMAL UNITS!

It's disgusting that we consider this economic development when to get dairy shifted to this industrial ag model an entire agricultural segment of our society had to be eliminated. And as it was eliminated so goes the schools and churches and downtowns of our rural America.

All my years of dairying we drank our milk right out of the bulk tank, fresh and pure. We were proud of our product. I've been on too many large dairies in western Kansas and every-single-time I left I thanked God for pasteurization. My observation of this model of the dairy industry is that



the dairy husbandry teaching Ed Call and Dick Dunham did so very well at Kansas State University over their legendary careers there went right out the window.

When I google "How many dairy cows are in the state of Kansas?" the KLA website comes up and states that there are 175,000 dairy cows on 209 dairies. So, what happens now? Will our whole dairy production industry here in Kansas consist of two or three dairies? Or will Kansas raid dairies from other states?

Googling how many dairy cows are in the United States, it comes up with approximately 9.4 million dairy cows. So, if I punched the buttons right on my calculator, at the scale of the High Plains Ponderosa dairy, our entire milk production in the United States could very well come from about a hundred dairies in the whole United States in the not-so-distant future!

Consider how fragile that food supply chain would be. Just one dairy disaster would take out 1% of the nation's production! We have already experienced what this kind of bottleneck causes in the beef industry when the Tyson plant at Holcomb was out of commission for a time due to the fire, I read that between 6% and 8% of the nation's processing capacity was taken out of commission during that time. That affected the industry dramatically. We saw what happened during Covid and how the chain difficulties affected the processing industry. Where is the flexibility in this concentrated system?

Why in the world does our society encourage this kind of consolidation? Hell, why in the world do we even ALLOW it?

Donn

Kansas Farmers Union delegates elect leadership, set policy at state convention in Salina

McPherson, KS — Kansas Farmers Union (KFU) hosted the organization's 116th annual state convention at the Hilton Garden Inn - Salina November 29-30. The event featured educational and informative speakers, the annual business meeting of Kansas Farmers Union, discussion and adoption of KFU's 2024 legislative policy, officer elections, and the presentation of annual awards.

This year's convention theme was "Let Us Reason Together," harkening back to the early days of Farmers Union and efforts to work across the political and urban-rural divides to find common ground.

Three seats on the KFU Board of Directors - Vice President, North District Director, and South District Director - were up for re-election.

Matt Ubel, Wheaton, was elected Vice President and will serve a two-year term. Ubel recently served as a North District Director for the past seven years.

Amanda Lindahl, Kansas City, was elected North District Director and will serve a three-year term. Lindahl has been growing food and community in the Kansas City metro for more than a decade and is currently transitioning efforts from urban food production back to her rural roots in Dickinson County where she is working to take over stewardship of the 5th generation family farm.

Ryan Goertzen-Regier, Hesston, was elected South District Director and will serve a three-year term. Goertzen-Regier grew up on and continues to work part-time on his family's fifth generation Kansas farm in Marion County that raises row crops, hogs, and cattle. He most recently served as KFU's Vice President.

Former South District board member Jason Schmidt, Newton was also appointed to an at-large position on the board. More information about the KFU board can be found at <https://www.kansasfarmersunion.org/board>

Four members were elected to represent KFU as delegates at the National Farmers Union Convention, March 10-12 in Scottsdale, Arizona. Kansas delegates will join others from Farmers Union organizations from across the nation to set policy during the convention.

Delegates who will represent Kansas:
James Bowden, Gypsum, KS
Tom Giessel, Larned, KS
Amanda Lindahl, Kansas City, KS
Scott Kohl, St. George, KS

In addition to a lively auction that raised over \$3,000 to benefit the KFU Foundation, the organization honored

Greg Stephens, Salina with the organization's Ruth Hirsh Award for his lifelong service and dedication to family farmers and secondary education. Richard Boxum, Downs, was honored with the Farmers Union Midwest Agent of the Year Award. Former Kansas Governor John Carlin was honored with the Linda Hessman Lifetime Achievement Award for his lifetime service and dedication to Kansas, preserving American history, and to defending civics and democracy.



KFU also debuted an underwriting promo which will air before and after each new episode of Smoky Hills Public Television's Season 12 of Real Ag and showed videos from U.S. Representatives Tracey Mann and Sharice Davids sharing their thoughts on the next Farm Bill and thanking KFU leadership and members for their advocacy efforts.

Through grassroots policy and local involvement, KFU members and staff play a key role in bringing concerns, issues, and needs to the attention of local, state, and national decision makers. KFU's state and national policy document is proposed, discussed, and ratified each year at our state convention.

Highlights from this year's policy discussion included a call for publicly subsidized crop insurance for specialty food crops. Longtime supporters of the cooperative business model, convention delegates reiterated their support for the Rochdale Principles and re-emphasized support of one member, one vote. Along those same lines, delegates added language opposing the use of a proportional voting system, or voting power based on member's use of the cooperative or on the amount of stock ownership.

Delegates also added language supporting adequate access to water resources for all Kansans.

Delegates passed five Special Orders of Business:

- Support for Kansas County Health Departments
- Support for Medicaid Expansion
- Discontinuation of the Medicare Advantage Program
- Priorities for the Next Farm Bill
- United States Postal Service

KFU's Special Orders of Business are the organization's main legislative priorities for the upcoming year. They are a timely message to policymakers about what Farmers Union members want them to act on in the near term. KFU's 2024 Policy Statement and Special Orders of Business can be found online at www.kansasfarmersunion.org/policy.

To view recordings of convention sessions, visit KFU's YouTube channel at www.youtube.com/@kansasfarmersunion8165.



Ethan Ralph Ntambala made his first KFU convention appearance at about 8 weeks of age. He was born to North District Director Rosanna Bauman on Sunday, October 8. We look forward to watching him grow!



How would you like to receive your Kansas Kontact?

KFU's quarterly newsletter will now be viewed via email attachment (PDF) or by visiting www.KansasFarmersUnion.org. If you have other mailing preferences, please return the detached form to the Kansas Farmers Union office by mailing it to
PO Box 1064McPherson, KS 67460,
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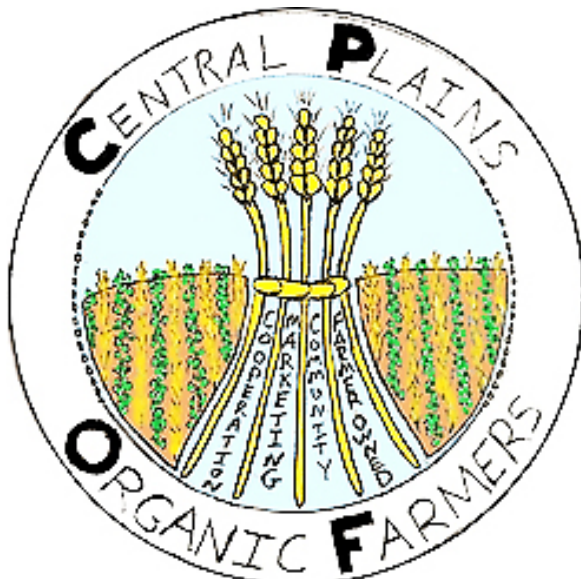
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To share your suggestions on speakers and breakout topics,
email nick@kansasfarmersunion.org or kfu.mary@gmail.com.

As it becomes available, look for more information under the
News and Events section at www.kansasfarmersunion.org.

Jill Elmers: Woman of Impact

By Anne Brockhoff,
Lawrence Business Magazine

Jill Elmers, Common Harvest CSA, is shaping the local food system with a focus on putting sustainably grown local foods on the plates of Douglas County residents.

Farming, in the collective imagination, is a solitary enterprise. Farming, in Jill Elmers' world, is anything but.

To be sure, Elmers spends plenty of hours working solo on her Moon on the Meadow operation east of Lawrence, near the Lawrence/Douglas County line. But she approaches farming with a spirit of cooperation that prioritizes engagement with producers, organizations, civic and governmental leaders, and others throughout the community.

"I consider myself part of the food system, and that system is made up from all different kinds of people," Elmers says. "I'm always more interested in collaborative work than in doing something on my own. We can move mountains when we work together."

Not that it's easy. Farming is notoriously grueling, and produce growers such as Elmers have little time during the season for anything other than planting, managing, harvesting and marketing their crops. That Elmers has through the years carved out time to serve on numerous organizational and advisory boards, and participated in countless food-policy discussions—all with an eye toward putting more sustainably grown local food on Douglas County plates—is impressive, Kevin Prather says.

"The day-to-day operations (of farming) are pretty all-encompassing," says Prather, who with his wife, Jessi Asmussen, owns Mellowfields Farm, in Lawrence, and is one of Elmers' business partners. "But she still makes time for all these other aspects."

From Bucket List to Dream Job

Elmers is originally from St. Louis, and she considers herself a Midwesterner at heart even though her family moved to Dallas when she was a grade-schooler. She earned an



Jill Elmers lives and farms near Lawrence, KS.

electrical engineering degree from Valparaiso University, in Indiana, then worked in Chicago before a newspaper ad for an acoustical design company drew her to Kansas City. She then moved to Lawrence. Elmers didn't have an agricultural background, but self-sufficiency had always appealed to her. When she had the chance to take a sabbatical, she decided to check "organic farming" off her bucket list by spending a summer working for Mark Lumpe on his Wakarusa Valley Farm, south of Lawrence.

Elmers was hooked. She accepted Lumpe's offer to continue farming a small parcel of his land and, in 2000, launched Moon on the Meadow. She bought 3½ acres in 2006; a year later, she started a CSA (community-supported agriculture) group. In 2013, she flipped her career to farm full time and do audio-visual design consulting on the side.

"I love growing food, and I love the community around the food system," Elmers says. "It's like having your dream job. I wake up most mornings feeling very happy."

Elmers grows certified organic flowers, tomatoes, beets, greens, potatoes, asparagus, strawberries, cauliflower, peppers, garlic, fennel, ginger and more. Some is planted in open plots; she also has four large high tunnels (unheated, plastic-covered structures sometimes called hoop houses) and seven smaller ones to extend the season and help control for the unpredictable weather that climate change has brought about. Elmers sells much of her harvest at the Lawrence Farmers' Market, where she has been a vendor for 21 years and now chairs its board of directors.

Jill Elmers: Woman of Impact Cont...

From that vantage point, Elmers sees how the pandemic and rising inflation affect both producers and consumers. The first sparked increased demand for local food. To meet it, the market has been “recruiting vendors like crazy” and is considering the possibility of a permanent location, she says. The second has some locals relying more regularly on the area’s farms for fresh produce.

“This is the first year ever in my life when people come to the market and say, ‘This is the cheapest place to buy food,’” says Elmers, who also offers delivery of online orders within Lawrence city limits. “If we can figure out how to keep (food purchases) here, we’re all going to be better off.”

The Power of ‘We’

We. It’s a word Elmers uses a lot when describing her operation, especially when outlining the contributions made by her five seasonal employees. Those workers are often, in fact, apprentices, some of whom she met through the Growing Growers KC program, which connects beginning farmers with established sustainable operations.

“In the farming world, it feels like there’s a lot of competition, and I don’t understand that,” Elmers says. “If I know how to do something, why am I not teaching everyone else? Why are they not teaching me?”

That many of her apprentices have gone on to grow similar products and sell them in the same venues as Moon on the Meadow might worry some people. Not Elmers.

She knows that “people in this area eat way more fruits and vegetables than local producers can grow,” says Tom Buller, who is executive director of the Kansas Rural Center (KRC). “She’s not interested in eliminating the competition but in growing the pie for everybody so we have a bigger local food system.”

He would know. Buller and his wife, Jenny, own Buller Family Farm, in Lawrence, and was one of Elmers’ early apprentices. They became partners when Elmers and the Bullers together purchased 28 acres of land in 2010, enabling both farms to expand. As Elmers’ CSA grew, she diversified its offerings by joining forces with the Bullers

and Red Tractor Farm, which was owned by Jessica Pierson (also a former apprentice) and Jen Humphrey.

Those three farms, together with Juniper Hill Farms, launched the Common Harvest CSA and soon added Mellowfields Farm to its list of suppliers. The CSA is still in operation today, although it has evolved. The Bullers now sell all their produce wholesale instead of marketing direct-to-consumer. Pierson and Humphrey are still homesteading on their farm but no longer sell food retail. Juniper Hill has expanded its own retail and wholesale operations, and added on-farm pizza nights and chef’s dinners.

Mellowfields, which grows certified organic produce on the eastern edge of Lawrence, remains Elmers’ Common Harvest CSA partner. The 24-week CSA grew to 125 shares in 2022 and offers “add-ons” from Sweetlove Farm, 1900 Barker, Wild Alive Ferments, South Baldwin Farms, Stirring Soil Farm and Crooked Bar N Ranch. That Elmers has long worked with so many other businesses should come as no surprise, Mellowfields’ Prather says.

“Jill has found (collaboration) to really be an important part of how she proceeds generally in life,” he says.

Food System Advocacy

Nowhere is that more true than in Elmers’ advocacy for a robust local food system that supports food production, processing, distribution, safety, waste disposal, nutrition and equity.



Jill Elmers joined the Kansas Farmers Union delegation for the National Farmers Union Fly-In September 11-13, 2023, where the team met with Senator Jerry Moran’s staff and a staffer from Rep. Trent Kelly’s (MS) office.

Jill Elmers: Woman of Impact Cont...

Lawrence and Douglas County are unique in that they joined forces to address all those issues more than a decade ago by forming the Douglas County Food Policy Council (DCFPC), making it the first such entity in the state.

“There is such a wide representation of the food system,” Elmers says of the DCFPC, which was established by the Douglas County Board of Commissioners in 2010 and became a joint city-county advisory body in 2013. “People in food sales, restaurant people, farmers, nutritionists, people who work to end food insecurity—it’s a real mix.”



Fly-In attendees met with members of Congress to highlight NFU priorities, challenges farmers and ranchers are facing, and goals for future legislation.

Elmers was an agricultural producer appointee on the council from 2012 to 2017 and served as chair for two of those years. A main priority at the time: creating a county-wide food system plan using both hard data and community input. The result: a 10-year plan that was adopted by both the Douglas County Board of Commissioners and Lawrence City Commission in 2017, and addresses everything from the economic vitality of farming and food access to soil and water quality and food-waste reduction.

“Convincing everyone it was really important to have food-system coordination within our county—that was pretty big,” Elmers says. She worked closely with the food-waste committee, helping to figure out how to collect unsold produce and share it with food pantries. That work spurred formation of Community Organized Gleaners (COG), which in 2020 collected and distributed 2,644 pounds of food from four Lawrence-area farms.

COG in 2021 joined forces with the Lawrence-Douglas County Sustainability Office and After the Harvest, a Kansas City, Missouri-based produce rescue nonprofit, to recover 17,656 pounds of food. A Community Composting and Food Waste grant from the USDA Office of Urban Agriculture financed much of that work, and other partners included the DCFPC, Just Food, The Sunrise Project, Lawrence Community Shelter, University of Kansas Center for Environmental Policy—and Elmers’ Moon on the Meadow.

“Through her leadership, (Elmers) engaged on a remarkable level with all aspects of the food system,” Elizabeth Keever says of working with Elmers on the DCFPC. Keever was, at the time, executive director of Just Food and a fellow DCFPC member; she is now chief development officer at Heartland Community Health Center.

And Elmers didn’t stop there. She and others on the DCFPC worked with city-planning staff to craft an Urban Ag text amendment that better defined urban farms, streamlined the special-use permit process for them and cleared the way for commercial production of crops and some livestock, and on-site sales of unprocessed agricultural products within city limits. The Lawrence City Commission approved that updated language in 2016.

Elmers is also a founding member of The Kansas City Food Hub, a farmer-owned cooperative formed in 2016. It aggregates the production of more than 20 farms within 125 miles of Kansas City, making locally grown produce, eggs, dairy and meats more accessible to restaurants, schools and other wholesale and retail customers throughout the region.

The Sunrise Project also benefited from Elmers’ energy. Programs include community meals and events, a community garden and orchard, a porch pantry and youth programs—all things that bring people of diverse cultures, neighborhoods, ages and socioeconomic statuses together in a former garden center at 15th and Leaned streets, which is now owned by Sunrise Green LLC. Although Elmers is no longer on The Sunrise Project’s board of directors, she’s a neighbor of sorts (Moon on the Meadow leases a greenhouse from Sunrise Green) and remains an enthusiastic supporter.

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Kansas Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program

Kansas farmers who sell fresh, unprocessed, locally grown fruits, vegetables, herbs or honey at local farmers markets, roadside stands, or home farm stands have an opportunity to be authorized to redeem coupons from participants in the Kansas Senior Farmers Market Program (KSFMNP). Farmers must attend a training and submit an Authorized Farmer Agreement by June 1, 2024.

KSFMNP provides coupons to eligible, low-income seniors so they can purchase fresh produce at local farmers markets from participating farmers. Currently, eligible seniors who apply will receive \$50 in coupons.

The Senior Farmers Market Program is a project of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service (FNS). The program is coordinated by the



Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE), which collaborates with local partners to identify and distribute coupons to eligible seniors.

For more information about applying to become an authorized farmer, including training dates and the Authorized Farmer Agreement, visit: kdhe.ks.gov/1048/.

Threats of foreign ownership greatly exaggerated; damage state's economic prospects



THE IOLA
Register

It always helps to have nefarious targets — imaginary or not — to help spur action.

China and Mexico, always convenient bogeymen for Kansas Attorney General Kris Kobach, are in the spotlight once again. This time, says Kobach, they're after our land.

"It's open season," Kobach warned Kansas legislators this week. "Mexican drug cartels have purchased a huge amount of land in Texas, Oklahoma and California."

It's only a matter of time, he intimated, until they make their way north.

Circle the wagons.

KOBACH'S goal is to ban the purchase of land greater than 3 acres by foreigners on the premise that they are up to no good.

When pressed for proof, he came up short. Which did not stop him from falling back on the xenophobic tropes that Mexicans are drug lords and China's out to control our food supply.

Kobach has proposed a five-member panel, including himself and the Kansas Bureau of Investigation, which reports to Kobach, be installed to review any requests for exemptions to the ban. This way, only the "good" people can invest in Kansas, said Sen. Mike Thompson, who is pushing Kobach's ban to become law.

The anti-vaccine, climate-change denying senator is chair of the Senate Committee on Federal and State Affairs, where the bill is scheduled to be heard.

THIS IS ALL smoke and mirrors.

Of the almost 50 million acres of agricultural land in Kansas, only 67,716 acres have any foreign involvement not related to energy production. That's 0.14 percent of all privately held land.

The majority of Kansas farmland with foreign interest — an estimated 1 million-plus acres, or 2.4 percent — is that leased by wind and solar energy companies.

According to an August 2023 report by the K-State Department of Agricultural Economics, if a U.S. company has over 10% foreign investment in the company stock, it is required to report in the same way a completely foreign-owned company would.

And even then, that 1 million acres is misleading.

According to the KSU research, though a wind farm may lease so many acres, its actual footprint is limited

to the physical structures and access roads, all the while allowing the landowners to continue growing crops or grazing livestock on the leased parcel. Wind energy companies currently have leases in 41 out of the 105 counties in Kansas.

Solar farms are in their infancy.

Italy and Canada have the biggest presence in Kansas when it comes to renewable energy. China and Mexico have none.

If Kobach's proposal becomes law, climate-change skeptics like Thompson would have untold power to deny the future development of renewable energy.

Of the foreign investors not involved with energy, Germany and the Netherlands have investments of 14,456 and 11,820 acres respectively. Chinese interests are involved in a single acre; Mexico has none.

NATIONALLY, the trends are similar.

About 3 percent of privately held agricultural land across the country is foreign owned. The biggest investor is Canada, followed by the Netherlands and Britain.

Chinese ownership is less than 1 percent — and shrinking. According to the USDA, the total amount of farmland owned in full or in part by Chinese firms shrank from 384,000 acres to 347,000 from 2021 to 2022.

Chinese investment in America peaked in 2016, and has fallen off a cliff since the pandemic, according to the American Enterprise Institute, a think-tank. What little investment there is, concerns the production of electric vehicles.

SO WHY the Mayday?

Fearmongering is an effective political tool.

Kobach and Thompson are banking on the public's gullibility of non-existent threats so that they can pose as the ultimate crime-stoppers.

Rather than insult our neighbors and those abroad eager to invest in our promising state, Kobach and Thompson would better serve Kansas by fostering respectful relationships.

Throughout history, our country's strength is our benevolence. Our power comes not from dominating, but by fostering relationships that benefit both sides.

It's that confidence that keeps the United States the envy of the world.

— Susan Lynn,
The Iola Register



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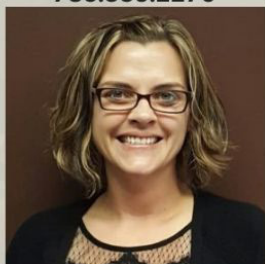
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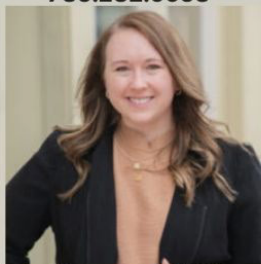
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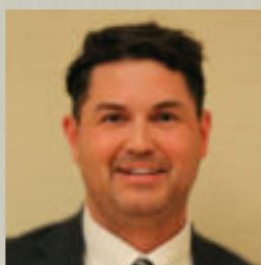
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An Update From Your Lobbyist

**By Sean Gatewood,
KFU Contract Lobbyist**

In my 15 years of working under the dome the state has never been in a financial position like what we are experiencing today. Right now, the state has about \$4.5b in reserves. Normally, the legislature has struggled to maintain a marginal ending balance, and that has really served to control some of the conversations in the statehouse. It also made it far easier to provide incentives to the state. This year is quite different, everyone has some ideas on how to spend that money, either through tax reduction or program spending. All have their merits.

The Governor has proposed a tax package that eliminates state taxes on social security, cuts property taxes on homes, increases the standard income tax deduction, creates a back-to-school sales tax holiday, speeds up the timeline for reduction in sales tax on food and basic needs products, and increases child-care credits. The Republican leadership has their package would also eliminate social security income from being taxed at the state level, property tax reductions on homes, and expedite the reduction/elimination in sales tax on food. It would replace the current 3 tax brackets with a single 5.25% tax bracket, provide for annual standard deduction increases by a cost-of-living adjustment, and reduce taxes on banks and financial institutions.

Obviously, there are differences and similarities. Clearly the issue will be a matter of scale and who is impacted. This tax issue is very likely to be what drives the entire session and my prediction is that there will be a deal at the end of the session that will be about taxes and potentially other issues.

Medicaid is also an issue that is looming large over the statehouse. Each year a couple of states expand, and we are still on the sidelines. To refresh your memory as to why we are in this unique circumstance, we are the only state to my knowledge that requires the legislature to approve the expansion.



Sean Gatewood

We do not have the ability to take it to the voters as many of our neighbors have done and the Governor cannot unilaterally expand. North Carolina is the latest state and I think that signals the start of the south coming along. Of the 10 remaining states most of them are in the south, with the exceptions being Wisconsin, Wyoming, and Kansas. Wisconsin does not have a gap like we do because their existing Medicaid program was far more generous than ours.

Expansion is an issue that is also impacted by the bumper crop of cash the legislature is in control of. The federal government has offered a 5% bump over 8 quarters in their match on the existing Medicaid program as an incentive to expand for the remaining hold out states. That just doesn't hit as hard if there are literally billions of dollars in the bank. The other way this is being impacted by the financial position of the state is that legislators are paying attention to the provider rates. They have been increasing provider rates across the board, which is a very good thing, but it also reduces the incentives of the medical world to advocate for expansion. The good news is that provider groups are still very engaged. The Alliance is hosting a few events this year that KFU should participate in if you can. If expansion has a chance this year it will be near the end of the session as part of a greater deal. We should let legislators know we support expansion in every way possible.

There really have not been any earth-shattering policies in action for water and agriculture this year. I do not anticipate that changing any time soon.

It is a pleasure to serve you, I appreciate the opportunity,

Sean Gatewood



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KFU PRESIDENT DONN TESKE SWEARS IN THE KFU DELEGATES TO NATIONAL FARMERS UNION'S 2024 CONVENTION.

Left to right: Donn Teske, Scott Kohl, Donna Pearson McClish, Jill Elmers, Andrew Clark, Kate Giessel, Tom Giessel, & James Bowden. Not pictured: Amanda Lindahl.