



# Kansas Courts News Release

## *Office of Judicial Administration*

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Supreme Court committee to review municipal court practices**

TOPEKA — An ad hoc committee appointed by the Kansas Supreme Court will review bonding practices, fines, and fees of Kansas' municipal courts to compile a "best practices" model for the courts to follow.

The committee will report its findings to the head of the Supreme Court's Office of Judicial Administration and to the League of Kansas Municipalities within a year.

The action follows a national effort to improve community court practices, some of which have been criticized for adversely affecting the economically disadvantaged.

The committee, appointed by Chief Justice Lawton R. Nuss in an order signed September 6, is tasked with studying current municipal court practices, examining the practices in other courts across the country, and compiling proposed changes.

"The Supreme Court wants to ensure that the rule of law remains paramount in the Kansas system of justice," Nuss said. "The important work of this committee should be of great help in not only maintaining fair and impartial courts for all but also recommending improvements where needed."

The Kansas Supreme Court has constitutional oversight of all courts in the state, although local municipalities are responsible for funding their local courts and appointing and paying judges. The Office of Judicial Administration implements the rules and policies of the Supreme Court and oversees the operation and administration of the judicial branch.

Issues on bonding practices, fines, and fees came to the forefront two years ago when a number of national advocacy groups began challenging municipal court practices, arguing they were designed to create revenue rather than guarantee those arrested would show up for court.

Judge Brenda Stoss, who is municipal judge in Salina and New Cambria, will chair the ad hoc committee.

"This group provides a vehicle to study recent developments and review the current practices of courts in our state to provide Kansas courts with the practical information they seek," she said.

Judge Amie Bauer, a municipal judge for Canton and Moundridge and current president of the Kansas Municipal Judges Association, said it is important to undergo this type of evaluation of municipal courts.

"By evaluating current practices and procedures across the state and developing some best practices, all Kansans will benefit, considering they are directly or indirectly affected by the judicial system in one way or another," said Bauer, who also is serving on the committee.

Judge Katie McElhinney, municipal judge in Olathe and a member of the new ad hoc committee, said she has spoken about the topic the past two years at the Kansas Municipal Judges Association annual conference. The Supreme Court committee's recommendations, she added, will have an even bigger impact.

"I think that by attacking this from a three-prong approach — the League of Kansas Municipalities, the Office of Judicial Administration, and the Kansas Municipal Judges Association — that we can get out best practices by going through city administrators and city attorneys, as well as through KMJA," she said.

In addition to Stoss, Bauer, and McElhinney, those named to the Ad Hoc Committee on Bonding Practices, Fines, and Fees in Municipal Courts are:

- Steve Baccus, municipal judge, Bennington, Minneapolis, Tescott, and Culver
- Timothy Fielder, municipal judge, Girard, Frontenac, and Cherokee
- Anthony Haffner, municipal judge, Oakley, Selden, Hoxie, and Hill City
- Jennifer Jones, municipal judge, Wichita
- Thomas Kemp, municipal judge, Elkhart
- Ken Lamoreaux, municipal judge, Waterville and Marysville
- Daniel Love, municipal judge, Dodge City
- Jason Maxwell, municipal judge, Sublette, Liberal, and Satanta
- Scott Miller, municipal judge, Lawrence
- Bradley Ralph, city attorney, Dodge City
- Richard Ress, municipal judge, Colby, Atwood, Brewster, and Rexford
- Maurice Ryan, municipal judge, Kansas City, Kan.
- Amanda Stanley, legal counsel, League of Kansas Municipalities
- Karen Torline, municipal judge, Shawnee, Roeland Park, Edgerton, and Prairie Village
- Scott Wright, municipal judge, Beloit

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*Resources for reporters:*

The Kansas Supreme Court [order](#) establishing the ad hoc committee.

The National Task Force on Fines, Fees, and Bail Practices [Resource Center](#).

The National Center for State Courts [2017 report](#) on trends in state courts.