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Contact:

Lisa Taylor
Public Information Director
785-296-4872
taylorl@kscourts.org



Molly Kujawa

Longtime court reporter named honorary bailiff for Supreme Court's special session in Manhattan

TOPEKA—For 30 years, Molly Kujawa has focused on every word during court proceedings.

But as honorary bailiff for the Kansas Supreme Court's special session Monday in Manhattan, she finally will have a chance to relax.

Kujawa (pronounced kee-AH-vah) has been a court reporter for Riley County District Court since 1988. Her job—to produce a verbatim record of each court proceeding—requires paying close attention to everything that is said.

As honorary bailiff, she will call to order the audience assembled for the special session. And then she can sit down and watch—without transcribing every word.

Kujawa has been the court reporter for Chief Judge Meryl Wilson since 1997. Wilson recommended her to open the special session, which begins at 6:30 p.m. Monday, September 24, in the auditorium of Manhattan High School, 2100 Poyntz Ave.

Chief Justice Lawton Nuss and the other justices of the Kansas Supreme Court made the final selection of the honorary bailiff.

"I recommended Molly for many reasons, but she has been a dedicated employee of the 21st Judicial District for over 30 years as a court reporter," Wilson said. "Every morning starts with a smile."

Kujawa says that's because she enjoys what she does.

"I like the challenge. Every day is different," she said. "And now that Judge Wilson is doing more criminal cases, I enjoy that more. They are more fast-paced and interesting to be a part of."

Interesting or not, each proceeding is important, and Kujawa has a key role to play.

"We produce a clean record of the proceedings—I take that part very seriously. People's lives are involved," she said.

After graduating from high school, Kujawa said she wasn't interested in spending four years in college.

"Brown Mackie College in Salina had a two-year court reporting program," she said, and she enrolled.

"It's been a great career for me," she said. "The growth within our judicial district has caused caseloads to increase every year, and as a result I am busier than I have ever been."

Kujawa said she's proud of her three-decade career and of the court system.

"Judges work hard to make sure people's rights are protected. They put in a lot of long hours," she said. "And court employees are dedicated. They are entrusted with very important cases."

The Supreme Court will be in session from 6:30 p.m. to about 8 p.m. Monday, September 24 in the auditorium of Manhattan High School, 2100 Poyntz Ave. The court will hear arguments in two cases. Details are available online by following the *Manhattan Special Session* link under *What's New* on the Kansas judicial branch website at www.kscourts.org.

After the session concludes, the justices will greet the public in an informal reception outside the auditorium.

Anyone who wants to attend the special session should plan to arrive early to allow time to get through security screening. Doors open at 6 p.m. Court security offers these guidelines to ease the process:

- Do not bring food or drink.
- Do not bring large bags, large purses, backpacks, computer cases, or briefcases.
- Do not bring knives, pepper spray, firearms, or weapons.
- Do not bring electronic devices like laptop computers, handheld games, personal digital assistants, or tablets. If you must carry a cell phone, turn it off and store it out of sight while court is in session.

Audience members are prohibited from talking during oral arguments because it interferes with the attorneys' remarks and questions asked by the justices. If someone arrives after proceedings start, or must leave the auditorium before it ends, he or she should be as quiet as possible entering and exiting the auditorium. Talking immediately outside the auditorium is also discouraged.

The special session will also be broadcast live over the Internet. The livestream may be accessed selecting the *Watch Supreme Court Live!* link on the judicial branch home page at www.kscourts.org.

Manhattan High School is the court's 16th destination since 2011, when it first convened outside of the Kansas Judicial Center to mark the state's 150th anniversary.

State of Kansas
Office of Judicial Administration
Kansas Judicial Center
301 SW 10th Avenue
Topeka, KS 66612-1507
785-296-2256
www.kscourts.org