

Headlines for Friday, February 9, 2024

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KANSAS PUBLIC RADIO NEWS SUMMARY



Emily Fisher

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KPR

Former CEO of Failed KS Bank Charged with Embezzling Millions

ELKHART, Kan. (KAKE) - The former CEO of a failed bank in southwest Kansas has been charged with embezzling tens of millions of dollars. Court documents show that the CEO of Heartland Tri-State Bank in Elkhart, Shan Hanes, made \$47 million in wire transfers from the Elkhart based-bank in an effort to purchase cryptocurrency. According to KAKE TV, prosecutors say the loss of that \$47 million caused the bank to fail. Prosecutors also allege Hanes purchased cryptocurrency with funds embezzled from a church and local investment club. If found guilty, Hanes could spend up to 30 years in prison and be forced to pay a fine of up to \$1 million. When the bank failed, the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation took control. It reopened as

Dream First Bank. Heartland Tri-State Bank had approximately \$139 million in total assets and \$130 million in total deposits, the FDIC said. Dream First Bank agreed to buy essentially all of Heartland Tri-State's failed assets.

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Kansas Won't Collect Much Revenue from Super Bowl Bets

OVERLAND PARK, Kan. (KNS) - The Kansas City Chiefs are playing in the Super Bowl for the second year in a row. Last season, lots of Super Bowl bets were made at state-owned casinos in Kansas, but the state only collected a tiny amount of revenue. During last year's contest, more than \$193 million in bets were made in Kansas, but the state collected a little more than \$1,000 in revenue. Even more money is expected to be waged in Kansas on this year's Super Bowl, but the state is expected to collect very little, especially if the Chiefs win. (Read more.)

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Kansas Attorney General Targets School Districts over Transgender Student Policies

WICHITA, Kan. (KNS) – Kansas Attorney General Kris Kobach called out several Kansas school districts Thursday for their policies on transgender students. The Kansas News Service reports that Kobach says some districts allow employees to hide from parents the fact that a student is using a different name or pronoun at school. Kobach says he notified six districts that their policies violate parents' rights, and he attacked the practice as "woke gender ideology." He says officials in Maize and Belle Plaine amended their policies. Four other districts — Kansas City, Olathe, Shawnee Mission and Topeka — responded to the attorney general's inquiry but have not changed their guidelines. Shawnee Mission Superintendent Michelle Hubbard said in a letter to Kobach that schools develop plans through discussions with students and their parents.

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Kansas Lawmakers Due for 93% Pay Raise in 2025

TOPEKA, Kan. (AP/KPR) - Kansas is set to nearly double state lawmaker pay at the start of next year. That will make their compensation better than it is for their counterparts in a majority of states. The increase is nearly \$28,000 a year for rank-and-file legislators. That will boost their total compensation to nearly \$58,000 or an increase of 93%. The pay increase appears to have bipartisan support. But lawmakers never voted on it directly. Instead, the Legislature set up a bipartisan pay commission last year. The commission's proposal was set to take effect unless both legislative chambers passed a resolution rejecting it. And they did not reject the pay raise.

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Kansas Legislature Considers Bill to Stop Appropriation of Federal Funds from Foster Children

UNDATED (KNS) – A bill in Kansas would stop the state from using foster children’s federal benefits to reimburse the Department for Children and Families for the child’s care. The Kansas News Service reports that the state would instead put the money in a savings account for the child. Supporters of the bill say Kansas has taken federal benefits from foster children without their knowledge, even though it rightfully belongs to them. But lawmakers questioned if it is fair to stop the state from collecting the federal funding on behalf of a child in its care. The funds are meant to be used for a child’s food, shelter and clothing. Republican Representative Paul Waggoner says that is what the state provides. “Is it that much of a stretch that the money it is going to their daily needs, it’s just going as it would be to the state of Kansas?” Waggoner asked. State researchers estimate the bill would cost the state about \$8.5 million of federal funding each year.

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San Fran Area Tortilla Company Moving Factory to Kansas

MOUNDRIDGE, Kan. (KSNW) - A San Francisco area tortilla company is moving its factory to Kansas. KSNW TV reports that the La Tortilla Factory will relocate its operations from Santa Rosa, California, to Moundridge, in McPherson County. The move will take effect in late March. The company already has a presence in Kansas and will now consolidate some of its operations in Moundridge.

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Labor Unions, Business Groups Endorse Bill to Reform Worker's Compensation in Kansas

TOPEKA, Kan. (KPR/KNS) – Kansas labor unions and business groups are endorsing a bill to reform worker’s compensation in the state. The Kansas News Service reports that business and labor groups met through the summer to work on a deal to improve the system for both workers and employers. The bill would increase caps on compensation for injured workers, tie those caps to inflation starting in 2027, and add some cost-saving measures for employers. The Senate Commerce Committee recommended the legislation be passed. It now awaits action in the Senate. Lobbying groups like the Kansas Chamber and the Kansas AFL-CIO support the bill.

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Emmett Till Exhibit Opens Friday at KU

UNDATED (KCUR) – The killing of Emmett Till is explored in a University of Kansas exhibit starting Friday. KCUR reports that the traveling show “Let The World See” details the life and murder of 14 year-old Emmett Till, lynched in 1955 by white vigilantes for allegedly “whistling” at a white woman. Sydney Pursel helped curate the exhibit and says it’s useful for having deeper conversations around race and injustice. “We have students from all walks of life that come through our building, but they might not go attend a Black Lives Matter protest. So it’s a way that we can reach broader audiences and use art as a way to teach these

histories and these stories,” Pursel said. A companion exhibit uses contemporary Black art to connect Till’s story to that of 17-year-old Trayvon Martin, killed by a Florida neighborhood watchman in 2012. The exhibition opens at the Spencer Museum of Art on the KU campus Friday, and runs through May 19th.

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Chiefs Fans Undeterred by Steep Prices, Limited Availability of Super Bowl Tickets

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (KCUR) – Kansas City Chiefs fans are paying steep prices for seats at this year’s Super Bowl. KCUR reports that Kansas City, Missouri resident, George Medina, has been a season ticket holder since Patrick Mahomes joined the team. He attended both the 2020 and 2023 Super Bowls. Medina and his daughters have their flights and hotels booked in Las Vegas -- they’re only missing one thing. “This year’s gonna be a little harder. We don’t have tickets yet,” Medina said, adding that “...we’re planning on leaving Friday morning, and you know, we’re gonna go regardless. And so, we’re going to have a good time. It’s Las Vegas and we’re going to make the best of it.” Medina is confident he’ll be able to score tickets through friends-of-friends. Super Bowl tickets are currently selling for nearly \$10,000 a piece.

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60 Years Ago this Week, the Beatles Appeared on Ed Sullivan

LAWRENCE, Kan. (KPR) - Sixty years ago this week, four young musicians from England arrived in New York City to appear on a popular TV program. The Beatles appeared on Ed Sullivan’s show on February 9th, 1964. Even though it was nearly halfway through the decade, many cultural historians mark that TV appearance as a turning point - the day the 1950s became “The Sixties.” TV and radio journalist Bob Kealing is the author of “Good Day Sunshine State: How The Beatles Rocked Florida.” Kealing, a Kansas City native and graduate of the KU School of Journalism, told Kansas Public Radio about an odd Kansas connection to the Beatles. Find out what it is by listening to Tom Parkinson’s report about the impact of the Fab Four on America, 60 years ago.

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Number of Monarch Butterflies Drops in Recent Key Population Count

UNDATED (KNS) – Butterfly lovers may have a harder time spotting monarchs this year in Kansas. Scientists say the size of the overwintering monarch population in Mexico is the second-smallest on record. There appear to be less than half as many butterflies as last winter. Kristen Baum directs Monarch Watch at the Kansas Biological Survey and Center for Ecological Research. She says if this year brings good rainfall that boosts plant blooms, it will help the population grow: “The thought is the population will rebound...but it’s going to take time and it really depends on all those other conditions.” The butterflies face threats such as habitat loss and insecticides. But Monarch Watch experts say drought delivered an extra blow last fall – making it hard for the butterflies to find enough nectar during migration. (Read more.)

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