

# THE STURGIS NEWS

Delivering  
For  
Sturgis  
and  
Union County

140TH YEAR

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NUMBER EIGHT



**TWO MEMORIAL DAY services were held in Union County on Monday. The first of those services was held at Uniontown City Cemetery where a wreath was placed at the gravesite of Pete Pierce. The ceremony included an honor guard and the playing of "Taps".**



## ECCJCA Could Be On Federal Closure List

After 60 years of serving youth from across the nation and providing jobs for area residents, Earle C. Clements Job Corps Academy could be facing closure.

The federal government's most recent budget cuts could impact over 300 employees at the local center as well as leave thousands of young people without the training job corps centers across the nation provide.

The budget proposal presented to Congress last week calls for cuts that will deeply impact every center in the US. In March, according to information provided by ECCJCA personnel, the Department of Labor terminated the contract with the company that conducted background checks for new enrollees. That move has resulted in a standstill of the enrollment process.

During a recent budget hearing, Labor Secretary Lori Chavez-DeRemer noted that while she is working with Congress to address concerns, the federal government has not yet made a decision on the future of Job Corps.

Management Training Corporation (MTC), the company that manages ECCJCA, the largest job corps in the country, is working with the National Job Corps Association and other operators to conduct an aggressive campaign to keep job corps centers across the country open.

Locally, Tessa Gough, director of ECCJCA, and her staff are reaching out to students, parents, employees, elected officials, employer partners and other members of area communities to flood Congress with letters of support and stories of their own personal experiences with job corps and its students and encourage the nation's leaders to keep funding the programs job corps centers provide.

Locally, students at Earle C. Clements Job Corps Academy are an important part of nearly every event held in Union County. At the forefront of many events are the academy's Honor Guard, and for many

events that require catering services, the school's culinary arts students are often both the chefs and the servers.

ECCJCA offers a variety of programs for disadvantaged youth who come to the center looking for a reboot in life and want to learn a trade or skill that will help them become successful, productive individuals. Diesel mechanics, auto mechanics, truck driving, business, electrical, auto technology, culinary arts, pastry culinary, solar photovoltaic technician, welding, CNA, computer technology, deckhand, maintenance and light repair, material handling, medical administrative assistant, office administration, and tile setting are among the programs offered for students ages 16 to 24.

Students who chose to attend the academy in Union County have the opportunity to earn certifications in a variety of program. They live on campus and have access to a traditional "away from home, campus lifestyle." For 60 years, the ECCJCA has partnered with county government and businesses, and now they need the help of the community. The center is asking that area residents, business people and individual share their stories about job corps with members of Congress by writing or calling Representative James Comer and Senators Mitch McConnell and Rand Paul at the following addresses.

Representative Comer, James  
Contact: <https://comer.house.gov/>  
(202) 225-3115

Senator McConnell, Mitch  
Contact: <https://www.mcconnell.senate.gov/>  
(202) 224-2541

Senator Paul, Rand  
Contact: <https://www.paul.senate.gov/>  
(202) 224-4343

It is urgent that calls be made today to help save the Job Corps program.

## UCBOE Anticipates \$39,481,160 Budget For FY 2026

The Union County Board of Education spent much of its work session discussing the fiscal year 2026 tentative budget, revenue sources and expenditure considerations at their work session on Thursday evening. The budget was submitted to KDE on Friday for approval at the state level. In September, the board will approve the district's working budget and submit that to KDE.

The board will be working with a \$39,481,160 budget that includes \$1,588,626 in debt service and a general fund of \$29,179,047. The remainder of the budget includes \$2.8 million in special revenue (grants) funds that are restricted and district activity funds totaling \$72,830 that are restricted. Other restricted funds include capital outlay of \$196,800; FSPK (facility) totaling \$1,215,467 and the district debt service fund. Set aside for food services is \$4,161,251 with the day-care fund listed at \$193,753. The district contingency plan is set at 6.06 percent, with the dollar amount totaling \$2,295,462, down slightly from FY 2025 but considerably higher than FY24 and FY 23.

Board members heard a report from financial officer Amy Morris who reviewed the expected revenue sources for the 2025-2026 school year and who gave an update on anticipated expenditures. Revenue will come through

SEEK funding which is expected to increase by \$306,000—reflecting a \$260 per pupil to \$4,586. The district's special education Child Count will increase by 25 students bringing an increase of \$247,000. The overall net increase to SEEK equals about \$454,000. The district expects no increase in property tax revenue and will likely see reduced interest income of about 2.75 percent.

Funds from grant revenues (Fund 2) will be updated in September when the working budget is presented to the board.

Union County does not anticipate reductions to Title I, Title II and Title IV in federal grants but will lose about \$67,000 in Title V grant funds.

Of concern for the district is the potential impact the closure of Victory Tech could have on both the district and students. That revenue impact, should the federal government close Earle C. Clements Job Corps would total about \$280,000 in lost revenue.

District expenditures will include a two percent district wide raise and competitive market raises for some departments including instructional assistants, custodians, bus monitors, and mechanics. The district will see a decrease in retirement costs—that rate will reduce from 19.71 percent to 18.62 percent. The district's unemployment rate remains unchanged at one percent.

SBDM Section VI will be funded at \$115 per pupil, totaling about \$197,000.

The district will see an increase in special education costs due to the December 1, annual Child Count. The budget will also see reclassification of three speech and language pathologists who will change from contract hires to employee status. The district will also restructure the special projects executive secretary position into a certified special education coordinator/lead preschool SPED position. The mental health position will continue at Rank II pay using Project Access grant funds until December and a state mental health grant. The Elevated Educator stipend will remain at \$2500, with 31 certified staff eligible for that program.

The budget also includes transportation needs that will provide one new replacement bus per the district schedule; a fleet vehicle replacement truck at a cost of \$65,000. The new truck will replace a 2001 maintenance truck with 198,000 miles.

Personnel is also reviewing options for roof repair/replacement on the fuel shed. The transportation department will also reduce the need for two budgeted full-time drivers and add a full-time bus monitor.

Facilities and maintenance needs will include as-

phalt repairs set up in the district's annual plan; those needs include the front lot at the middle school, the lower lot at the high school and the circle at Morganfield Elementary. Custodial needs include a Boost machine for UCHS, Kiavac for Sturgis Elementary and a floor machine for Morganfield Elementary.

The district also has a phased plan for HVAC replacement at Morganfield and Sturgis with Uniontown using 2025 grant prize money. A HVAC replace at the central office is also on the list of budget considerations.

Year two of four for the bathroom stall door replacement initiative at the middle school is also listed as a facility need along with the implementation of library furniture replace plan for FY 2026 at UCHS, FY 2027 for Morganfield and FY 2028 for Sturgis.

The technology plan includes general fund/SFCC offer of assistance match to purchase devices through a combination of lease and purchase plan.

The expenditure considerations also include a two percent raise plus \$12.00 an hour starting pay for cook positions. Food services will also see equipment purchases based on the needs assessment—considerations include new serving lines for all schools and a cooler for UCMS. The national school

lunch program has not announced the reimbursement rate for FY 26.

The day care fund Fund 52 will add one program assistant.

Capital outlay and FSPK will be updated based on tentative SEEK funding calculations.

The district debt service will increase based on the bond issue.

In the past seven years, Union County Schools employees have experienced a total of 12 percent salary increase, and for seven consecutive years classified staff have seen competitive pay increases. The Elevated Educator program has provided \$2500 stipends for the past four years and \$500 veteran mentor stipends. This year's salary increase of two percent districtwide plus competitive market adjustments for some departments along with benefits/retirement will total \$566,599.

District operating expenses include \$17,935,487 for student instruction and support service; \$2.9 million for plant operations and maintenance; \$2.2 million for student transportation; \$1.5 million for school administration support; \$1.0 million for business support services and \$1.0 million for district administration support (numbers are rounded). Salaries and benefits total about \$23.3 million.