

# The Sturgis News

Delivering  
For  
Sturgis  
and  
Union County

140TH YEAR

STURGIS, UNION COUNTY, KENTUCKY, WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 7, 2026

NUMBER FORTY

## New Candidate Filings; Two Withdraw

Additional candidates have added their names to the list of individuals who will seek election in county races, and two individuals who had filed early in the filing period have now withdrawn from those races.

All five magisterial races will be contested with Ehren Schaffter adding his name to candidates who will seek the district four magisterial

seat. That seat is presently held by Dakota Jones who is seeking re-election to represent district four.

Derek Johns has filed his intent to run for the district three magisterial seat. Doug Omer, Stephen Hendrickson and Brian French will also appear on the district three ballot; the district three seat is presently held by Jim Ricketts who has chosen not

to seek re-election. All four candidates are listed as Republican party affiliates.

In early December, Jake Mason had filed to seek the district three magisterial seat; however, the latest listing from the Michael G. Adams, Secretary of State's website shows that Mason has withdrawn from the race. Also shown as a race withdrawal is Michael Turner.

Turner filed in late November as a candidate for magistrate in district five. Turner's withdrawal presently leaves Bo Girtten unopposed as he seeks re-election.

County Clerk Garrick Thompson will have opposition in the county clerk's race with Christopher Lee Willett having filed his intent on December 18, to run for that office. Willett is a newcomer to

the political arena, and both he and Thompson run as Republican candidates.

Potential candidates have until Friday, January 9, to file their intent to run. According to clerk Garrick Thompson, candidates will draw for ballot positions on January 15.

The Sturgis News will carry a complete list of candidates at the close of the filing period.

## Rep. Gooch Appointed To Leadership Position On Southern Energy Board

State Representative Jim Gooch has been appointed Treasurer of the Executive Committee for the Southern States Energy Board (SSEB), an interstate organization that aims to foster collaboration and innovation in energy and environmental policies, programs, and technologies across the south. Gooch chairs the Kentucky House's Committee on Natural Resources and Energy and represents Kentucky's 12th House District, which includes Crittenden, McLean, Union, and Webster counties.

"We are truly at a crossroads with energy in America today and the SSEB plays a major role in determining our future. This appointment is both an honor and a responsibility that I will continue to approach with great care and commitment," Gooch said. "Serving in a leadership role on the board allows Kentucky to have a strong voice in shaping regional energy policy and ensuring our priorities are represented at the table."

Gooch was first appointed as an alternate member to the SSEB under Governor Steve Beshear in 2013. He was ap-



pointed as the House member in 2017 and reappointed in 2019 by Governor Matt Bevin.

Gooch is recognized on the state and national level as an outspoken advocate of Kentucky's coal industry and champions comprehensive energy initiatives.

"Kentucky coal fueled the economic growth and industrial prosperity of the 20th century, lighting homes, powering factories, and sustaining communities across the Commonwealth. We intend to honor that legacy by making sure Kentucky remains an energy leader in the 21st century, with coal continuing to play a

vital role in delivering affordable and reliable power," Gooch said.

The Southern States Energy Board promotes clean energy solutions, fosters collaboration among industry and governmental leaders, and supports research and development initiatives. The board is dedicated to advancing effective energy and environmental policies that strengthen economic growth and competitiveness across the South. Its membership includes governors and state legislators from sixteen southern states and two U.S. territories, as well as a presidential appointee.

Speaker David Osborne added, "I'm extremely pleased to see Chairman Gooch appointed to a leadership position on the Southern States Energy Board and appreciate his willingness to represent our state's and his district's priorities in this role. By working collaboratively with other southern states, we can promote innovation, protect our communities, and pursue practical energy solutions that balance reliability, affordability, and environmental stewardship."

## Audit Results Released For County Clerk

State Auditor Allison Ball released the audit of the 2024 financial statements of Union County Clerk Garrick Thompson. State law requires the auditor to conduct annual audits of county clerks and sheriffs.

Auditing standards require the auditor's letter to communicate whether the financial statement presents fairly the receipts, disbursements, and excess fees of the Union County Clerk in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America. The clerk's financial statement did not follow this format. However, the clerk's financial statement is fairly presented in conformity with the regulatory basis of accounting, which is an acceptable reporting methodology. This reporting methodology is followed for all 120 clerk audits in Kentucky.

The auditor noted no instances of noncompliance. The auditor also noted no matters involving internal control over financial reporting and its operation that were considered to be material weaknesses.

The county clerk's responsibilities include collecting certain taxes, issuing licenses, maintaining county records, and providing other services. The clerk's office is funded through statutory fees collected in conjunction with these duties.

The audit report can be found on the auditor's website.

## Be Alert For Scams All Around

The digital era has its benefits. People from all over are able to connect almost instantaneously. Computers have made fast work of many tasks that once took hours or days to complete. Information or even funds can be shared at the click of a button. But for all of the benefits technology has provided, there is a darker side to the connectivity of the modern world. What has become easier for the general public also has become easier for those looking to take advantage of others.

Scams and internet crimes are now commonplace. The Federal Bureau of Investigation reported that a record \$16.6 billion in losses due to scams were reported to them in 2024. The Pew Research Center indicates 73 percent of adults in the United States have experienced some kind of online scam or attack.

The office of Ken Paxton, the Attorney General of Texas, reports various ways to recognize scams, and that spotting these tactics can help people avoid being taken advantage of.

- Someone contacts you. When a party contacts you first, you can't be certain of their legitimacy. Also, email addresses and caller ID can be faked.

- Easy money is offered. Many scammers dangle a



promise of some sort of financial gain, whether it's a prize or an easy loan. These are usually too good to be true.

- Personal information is requested. Be on alert anytime someone asks for personal information, whether it's a bank account number or other identifying information. You could become a victim of identity theft.

- A request for money up front. If someone requests money to pay off a debt or to

receive a prize, it is likely a scammer trying to take your money.

There are many types of scams, and the following are some prominent ones.

- Counterfeit merchandise: A scammer can replicate the look of a legitimate retailer's website. Purchasing items online through a link may lead you to a counterfeit site selling merchandise that is not legitimate and/or will not even arrive.

- Charity and disaster

fraud: Charity fraud scams typically emerge in the wake of a natural disaster or another sudden, tragic event. Scammers may target generous individuals through email, social media posts, crowdfunding platforms, and cold calls. Never donate to charities you have not verified as legitimate.

- Cryptocurrency investment fraud: Scammers convince victims to deposit more and more money into financial investments using

cryptocurrency. These investments are fake and all the money is under control and stolen by overseas criminal actors, says the FBI.

- Bogus debts: You may receive a message or threatening correspondence that demands payment on a debt that you haven't heard of. These scams work because some people are scared and take the bait. Legitimate creditors will produce proof of an actual debt.

- Home repair scams: Unsolicited companies may offer a "limited-time deal" and rope you into having a job done with "materials left over from another job." Be very cautious in these scenarios, as they may take your money and run.

- Emergency scams: These are sometimes called Grandparent Scams because they often target the elderly. A criminal may claim to be a friend or family member in dire need and request money. Some scammers sound like the person a senior knows thanks to technology that enables them to do so.

Scams are a continuous problem and everyone needs to be on their guard. Safeguard your personal information and avoid paying out any money without first conducting thorough research.