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Vance visit again highlights Kansas as crossroads of 2026 midterms

BY KACEN BAYLESS [kbayless@kcstar.com](mailto:kbayless@kcstar.com)

President Donald Trump went to Park City. Vice President JD Vance traveled to Olathe. And, now, the vice president is set to return for a rally at a steel company in Topeka.

The barnstorming tour marks an extraordinary show of attention for Kansas, a state Republicans have dominated in feder-

al elections for nearly a century. But, this year, a sleeper U.S. Senate race is now drawing national attention, big donors and visits from the top leaders of the Republican Party.

Sen. Roger Marshall is caught in the middle of a bitter reelection campaign against the Rev. Adam Hamilton, a Democrat. The race, according to most polling, is close and has ushered in hope for Democrats that they might pick up a Senate seat for

the first time in 94 years.

A perfect storm of factors — economic concerns, Trump’s unpopularity, a strong challenger and a series of controversies for Marshall — has made Kansas one of the most closely-watched states in the nation ahead of the Nov. 3 election, according to political experts.

The race simultaneously represents a potential reckoning for Kansas and a barometer for the country.

“It’s the No. 1 race in the eyes of the nation because it’s become a possible metaphor for this election,” said Bob Beatty, a political scientist at Washburn University who closely tracks Kansas campaigns.

Across the country, Republicans are preparing for a punishing election amid voter backlash to gas prices, tariffs, war with Iran, immigration enforcement and Trump himself. Control of both chambers of Con-

gress is at stake in a slew of states from Michigan to Texas.

But the repeated visits from the White House are unusual for Kansas, a reliably red state that Trump won with 57% of the vote in 2024. Together, the three trips from Trump and Vance illustrate the national importance of the race, which polling suggests is neck-and-neck.

SEE VANCE, 4A



JENNA THOMPSON [jthompson@kcstar.com](mailto:jthompson@kcstar.com)

Henry Barbosa is closing Overland Park Shoe Repair to “wear life like a loose garment.”

Overland Park shoe repair closes after 66 years in a dying, yet ‘human’ industry

BY JENNA THOMPSON [jthompson@kcstar.com](mailto:jthompson@kcstar.com)

For the past 66 years in downtown Overland Park, businesses have thrown up “for lease” signs and painted over murals — knocked down walls and redecorated awnings.

Once-barren lots have been excavated to lay foundations for apartments, roadways and res-

taurants. The iconic Overland Park Clock Tower now overlooks the district, where its farmers market welcomes thousands of tote-wielding shoppers.

Amidst all the change, Overland Park Shoe Repair has stood at the corner of Conser and West 80th Street, frozen in time. It’s been fixing footwear since 1960, the same year the city it calls home was incorporated.

Its story doesn’t start with Henry Barbosa, but he’s about to punctuate its final chapter. He’s been working at the shop since 1986 and is its fourth and final owner. Overland Park Shoe Repair — a time capsule in the middle of a modern, burgeoning downtown — will close its doors at the end of the year.

A sign in the window of his shop depicts a cartoon version of Barbosa: tan skin, brown

eyes, white hair that flows in a backward swoop. “Henry is retiring!” it reads, letting customers know the doors will close on Dec. 31 and shoe drop-offs will end on Halloween.

News of the shop’s closure must have spread to his customer base already. Three customers lined up behind the counter on a Wednesday afternoon, one with a duffle bag full of athletic shoes.

“You’re busy. I’ve never had to wait this long,” remarked a lady with a high-and-tight hairdo.

“I’m always busy,” Barbosa replied with a smile in his voice.

Another rose from her chair to update Barbosa on her recent brain surgery. She had no shoes

SEE SHOE REPAIR, 3A

REALITY CHECK

Marshall says 3 Kansas manufacturers benefitted from Trump tariffs

BY DYLAN LYSEN [dylan.lysen@kcstar.com](mailto:dylan.lysen@kcstar.com)

Republican U.S. Sen. Roger Marshall argues that President Donald Trump’s aggressive tariff policies have been an economic boon for the country, and namedropped three Kansas manufacturers as companies that have benefitted.

At least one of those manufacturers has spoken out against the claim, according to the Kansas Reflector.

Tariffs are taxes imposed by the U.S. government on imported goods. The Trump administration increased the tariffs on imports from most U.S. trade partners, leading to fraught foreign relations, including a trade war with Canada.

Marshall’s defense of the trade strategy comes as he is facing a tough reelection campaign against Democratic pastor Adam Hamilton, who also challenged Marshall’s claim during a debate earlier this week.

**Claim:** Trump administration tariffs have helped at least three Kansas manufacturers

**Verdict:** At least partially false.

Marshall’s claim that specific Kansas businesses benefit from tariffs could not be verified. One business disputed the claim outright.

Marshall named three specific manufacturers in Kansas as examples of businesses growing because of the Trump administration’s tariffs policies: Peerless Windows in Fort Scott, Superior

SEE TARIFFS, 4A

Kansas attorney general race heats up over clergy abuse investigation

BY JUDY L. THOMAS [jthomas@kcstar.com](mailto:jthomas@kcstar.com)

The television ad begins with a dark video of an empty swing and the faint sound of children’s voices in the background, then shifts to footage of vacant pews inside a church.

After that comes an image of Kansas Attorney General Kris Kobach.

“They were children, sexually abused by Catholic clergy in Kansas,” a voice says. “One

hundred eighty-eight suspected predators, and Kris Kobach has a file with their names. But he won’t release the list, covering up for clergy alleged to have committed rape and sexual battery.”

“Many may still live in Kansas,” continues the 30-second ad paid for by the Kansas Values Institute, “but you’d never know if one lives next door, because of Kris Kobach. Survivors deserve justice. Kansas deserves the truth. Tell Kobach, prosecute the abusers.”

Clergy sex abuse has become a heated issue in the Kansas attorney general race, with victim advocates and Kobach opponents accusing him of protecting predators in his handling of a multi-year investigation involving Kansas’ Catholic dioceses.

Democratic challenger Chris Mann is among those calling for the release of the names of the suspected abusers identified in the investigation.

SEE INVESTIGATION, 10A



KATIE BERNARD The Kansas City Star

A coalition of lawmakers, child abuse survivors and activists called on Kansas Attorney General Kris Kobach to release names of Catholic clergy credibly accused of child sex abuse.



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