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## County seeks to fill revenue gap

By Heather Alwin  
Colby Free Press  
colby.society@nwkanas.com

Thomas County plans to go up to \$520,000 in debt over the next 15 months to pay for costs associated with upcoming jury trials.

County Attorney Kevin Berens told the county commissioners at their meeting Monday that he has one more trial this year and several already scheduled for next year but the county doesn't have enough money budgeted to pay for those trials.

He estimated the county's court system will need \$20,000 more to get through the remainder of this year and \$500,000 more to get through next year.

"Regardless of whether the money's there," said Berens, "Those trials will go on."

Commissioner Paul Steele asked Berens to prepare an application for "no fund" warrants to cover the shortage.

The county must get permission from the state's court of tax appeals before issuing warrants to cover a gap in revenue.

"Once you get the authority, you sell warrants as the need arises and we will levy a tax on the budget we prepare next year," Steele said.

Warrants function like a loan, putting the county on the hook to repay the money in the future.

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*It isn't official until the sign is planted*



SAM DIETER/Colby Free Press

Dylan Stithem, who works for Earthworks, filled in dirt around grass Tuesday by the new sign in front of Poolside Park.

Extension Agent Diann Gerstner said the sign was put in place Friday.



A good time was had by all as about 400 people turned out for the Heartland Christian School barbecue Sunday (above). Student Abigail Van Marel, sixth grade (front, at right), Rachel Van Marel, second grade and Nikki Berkgen, third grade were on the cleanup crew. The event raised about \$6,500, which will help the school pay extra expenses not covered by tuition.

DEENA BANDY/Heartland Christian School  
SAM DIETER/Colby Free Press



## Kansas changes commercial plates

Beginning in 2014, Kansas will be making changes to the way commercial vehicles are licensed and taxed.

The state plans to transition to having all commercial vehicles licensed in February rather than spreading registration through the year based on the owner's alphabetical order, said Thomas County Treasurer-elect Layn Bruggeman.

When commercial vehicles come due for registration in 2014, owners will have to obtain a commercial plate and their registration will be pro-rated to the end of the year. Then, in 2015, registration will be due in February for all commercial vehicles.

The county will charge a new state-mandated commercial plate fee with these new registrations. The fee is based on the vehicle's weight and replaces the personal

property tax currently charged on commercial vehicles, said Bruggeman.

Commercial vehicles are vehicles engaged in commerce that are used to transport property or passengers if the vehicle's gross weight is 10,001 pounds or more, the vehicle is designed or used to transport 15 passengers or more, including the driver, or the vehicle is used to transport hazardous materials in quantities that require placards.

Farmers who haul their own products will generally be exempt from these requirements, said Treasurer Donita Applebury.

The treasurer's office will send more information to those vehicle owners it believes will be impacted by the change.

For more information, go to [www.truckingks.org](http://www.truckingks.org).

## Shutdown hits NSA

Kimberly Dozier  
AP Intelligence Writer

WASHINGTON — U.S. intelligence officials said today that the government shutdown is seriously damaging the intelligence community's ability to guard against threats. They said they're keeping counterterrorism staff at work as well as those providing intelligence to troops in Afghanistan, but that the danger would increase daily with fewer spies to track targets.

Director of National Intelligence James R. Clapper told Congress today that roughly 70 percent of the civilian workforce — including staff from the CIA, National Security Agency and Defense Intelligence Agency — have been furloughed.

Clapper told the Senate Judiciary Committee that he has tried to keep on enough employees to guard against "imminent threats to life or property," but may have to call more back to work if the shutdown continues.

"The risk is 75 percent more than it was yesterday," Clapper said, when asked to quantify the damage.

"The danger here ... will accumulate over time. The damage will be insidious," Clapper said of the information lost because he has fewer staffers to track targets. "So each day that goes by, the jeopardy increases," he said.

Sen. Ted Cruz, R-Texas, criticized President Barack Obama for what said was an unwillingness to work with Republicans on the budget impasse that caused the shutdown.

"I don't think President Obama should be playing politics with this. He should be stepping forward to address this problem right now.... The intelligence community needs to be funded."

The federal government effectively shut down as of midnight Tuesday because of a standoff over the federal budget. House Republicans wouldn't agree to a bill to

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## Kansas hospitals complain about KanCare delays in payment

TOPEKA (AP) — Hospitals are complaining about delays since the state switched to a new managed care plan for Medicaid.

When KanCare rolled out in January, most of the state's Medicaid recipients were moved into plans administered by three private companies, *The Topeka Capital-Journal* ([is.gd/zjpLo6](http://is.gd/zjpLo6)) reports. Since the switch, hospitals have reported problems getting reimbursed for services they perform and getting prior authorizations to provide certain types of treatment

in a timely manner, said Cindy Samuelson, Kansas Hospital Association vice president for member services and public relations.

Hospitals estimate it is taking three to 10 days to authorize treatment, Samuelson said. She said the state has attempted to deal with the issues, but the insurers haven't been as cooperative so far.

The change to KanCare was promoted as a way to save money and improve care. Gov. Sam Brownback announced earlier this month that \$37 million had

been saved so far and said that would allow 650 more people with physical or developmental disabilities to get off the waiting list for in-home services.

But Carrie Saia, chief executive officer of Holton Community Hospital, said she was skeptical of the savings. She said some of the hospital's staff members still were working on getting paid correctly for services performed in March, though rural health clinics affiliated with the hospital haven't had the same difficulties.

"We expected there to be some bumps,

but not 10 months into it, so many bumps," she said. "The reason they're saving so much money is we're not getting paid correctly."

Robert Moser, secretary of the Kansas Department of Health and Environment, said the managed care organizations have an incentive to meet quality standards because a percentage of their payments will be withheld if they don't meet goals set by the state.

Moser acknowledged there have been some issues with the change and that the

three managed care companies have been meeting with his agency and several others to come up with solutions. The managed care organizations have pledged to hire more staff and improve training.

Moser said service has improved, and 97 percent of clean claims are being pro-

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