



# Board of Commissioners Labette County

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Since 1867

PRESS RELEASE+++++

The County Commission is taking action that we really do not want to take, but have been given no alternative by presiding Judge Oliver Kent Lynch.

No one in Labette County was given notice or consulted when judge Lynch moved the court from the Parsons Judicial Center to the Oswego Courthouse.

Last week we had a conference that included the Commission, the Sheriff, the Chief of Police and City Administrator from Parsons, and the County Attorney. We told the judge the negative impact his decision had on our respective budgets, totaling at a minimum about \$250,000 or so over the next year in increased costs, primarily in security costs.

While Judge Lynch has the power to assign Judges, under Kansas State Law, the **County and Sheriff are responsible for security**. This change by Judge Lynch, requires the County of Labette to run full Court security at TWO locations for the safety of the public, jurors, witnesses and court staff. It also means the County Attorney must staff Oswego for all types of criminal proceedings.

The Commission's decision is not made lightly, but if we do not make immediate and sweeping changes this financial burden falls directly on the taxpayers of Labette County. We are open to discussing alternative solutions with the presiding judge.

These changes are made, unfortunately, due to the press of time (the Sheriff is already expending overtime to staff both locations) with the same courtesy and notice Judge Lynch gave us.

The Commission is forced to close the Parsons Judicial Center to the public except when court is actually in session. This will take effect Weds, 2-5-2020. This may involve a rescheduling of Court dates. We hope this will be temporary, but Judge Lynch gave us no hint as to a timeline.

We realize this is an imposition and inconvenience on the citizens of Labette County, but absent finding a quarter of a million dollars to run two separate court houses we have no choice if we are to keep taxes at their current level, which are already too high.

The commission believes different areas of government should work together to achieve the goal of service to our citizens. We have been unable to do so in this situation; the 11<sup>th</sup> Judicial District being uncooperative.

Unfortunately, the Judiciary in Kansas sometimes acts without consideration of, or respect for, elected official's duties.