

Clay County Sheriff's Office

Sheriff Will Akin



Undersheriff Jeff Self

Embrace Change... Create Value... Inspire Others...

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Law Enforcement Sales Tax renewal to be on Nov. 2 ballot

Clay County voters will get to decide on Nov. 2 whether to renew the existing 1/8th cent sales tax that funds about a quarter of the Sheriff's Office's operating budget.

"This tax is a critical source of funding for everything our Office does to ensure public safety in Clay County," Sheriff Will Akin said. "It provides for everything from jail maintenance and staffing to school resource deputies."

The sales tax has been in place since 1998 and goes to voters for renewal every 12 years. In the last fiscal year, it generated about \$5 million. The tax charges 1/8th cent for every dollar spent. For example, on a \$20 purchase, the tax would be 2.5 cents.

The Clay County Commission voted for the upcoming ballot language to remove the 12-year sunset on the tax, both because of the vital role the tax plays in funding the Sheriff's Office, and to reduce election costs to taxpayers. For most Clay County residents, this will be the only item on the Nov. 2 ballot. To hold the election will cost about \$100,000. Removing the sunset would eliminate future election costs, and the County Commission could vote to repeal the tax at any time. The revenue generated by the tax would be audited annually, according to the [ballot language](#).

From 2009 (when the tax last renewed) to 2019, the population of Clay County has grown by 13%, according to census data. During that time, the staffing of the Clay County Sheriff's Office increased by 9%, but reported crimes increased by 57%. One reason for this is the Sheriff's Office took over police services for several small towns, including Holt, Mosby, Birmingham and Randolph. The Sheriff's Office took over law enforcement duties in County Parks in early 2021. Deputies also are increasingly backing up police officers from other understaffed departments in Clay County.

The average daily detention population varied from 309 in 2010 to 356 in 2017 and 2018, necessitating more staffing. COVID protocols have placed increased demands on detention staff and the facility itself.

In addition to increased patrol and detention duties, the Clay County Sheriff's Office also has worked to provide School Resource Deputies to the growing North Kansas City School District. Seventeen deputies now serve the District, up from eight in 2009. The Sheriff's Office also has taken on the cost of body and in-car cameras and their data storage for increased transparency and accountability. Additionally, a social worker will be starting with the Sheriff's Office in October.

The sales tax renewal vote on Nov. 2 comes at a time of continued growth for Clay County, necessitating a growth in the staffing and equipment needs of the Sheriff's Office.

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