Kiger announces Heavener Town Hall water meeting

State Rep. Lundy Kiger invites residents, business owners and industry leaders in Heavener to attend a town hall meeting Thursday, June 27, 2019, tentatively at the Heavener City Library, located on East C Avenue one block east of downtown. The time and location will be announced as times are finalized by all parties.

This meeting is to review the specific issues that poor water quality is causing everyone in the city and to take written comments for the database. Kiger will lay out a plan in working with the city to make needed improvements. Everyone concerned is invited to attend.

Kiger plans to invite or include state and federal agencies over the next two weeks, including officials from the Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality, the Oklahoma Insurance Commission, the Oklahoma Corporation Commission, the Oklahoma Department of Health, the Attorney General’s Office, as well as people from the offices of Oklahoma U.S. Rep. Markwayne Mullin, Oklahoma U.S. Sens. James Lankford and Jim Inhofe, and other state or federal agencies that may have an interest or direct oversight of municipal water quality for citizens.

Kiger said that for the past two weeks he’s received multiple calls from members of the public, business owners and industry leaders on the poor water quality, or no water at times for the residents of Heavener.

These collective comments received by his office tell a story of unnecessary and undue hardship on the people of Heavener, who are still paying a premium for their water, regardless if they can use it or not.

“When you hear and see the complete story from people it’s unimaginable that any community could allow their water infrastructure to remain so far below acceptable standards, and then not doing anything about it over past decades of complaints,” Kiger said.

Kiger announced in a newspaper column sent last Friday that for him, “Time’s Up for Heavener’s Water Improvements” and now it’s time for action and for city leaders to invest in a plan to address their water infrastructure system.

Even though this is a municipal issue that should be handled by the city, Kiger said he’s taking these steps because it’s the right thing to do, as he represents all of the people, business owners and industries of Heavener as a part of Oklahoma House District 3.

“Heavener is a beautiful city with many great and wonderful assets, and if city leaders don’t take action they risk the reputation of Heavener’s business friendly attitude,” Kiger said. “This will very well spill over to the entire county and region, and people who are considering moving, not to mention businesses staying or looking to locate there will reconsider.”

Kiger said his hope is that city leaders listen to what he is hearing and make the decision to do the right thing and lay out an immediate plan to secure funding to replace their piping and any water treatment equipment needed to meet state and federal regulations.

He said that rom the comments he’s received, it appears there may be multiple violations not only to the public, but he has strong concerns that the city water system overall may not even be meeting all regulations that allows the city to actually operate their water treatment plant and pump stations.

Kiger said, “I have pictures that show how degraded this piping system is, and if something doesn’t get done this time, it never will until the entire piping infrastructure system shuts down beyond repair.”

Over the years, Kiger said he’s seen multiple stories in newspapers and on the news of brown to black water.

“This causes many hard-working individuals to lose days of working and making enough money to pay their bills, and it also causes many businesses to lose profitability on the days the water system is out of service,” Kiger said. “This is ridiculous that a city would put their people and working population who have invested in the city through this.”

If the water quality is bad enough that people can’t use the water, then they’re told to flush out their lines at their cost to fix the city’s problems, Kiger said. With the poor quality of water, it’s ruining plumbing fixtures, hot water tanks and dishwashers, not to mention the cost of people on fixed incomes having to replace their appliances.

There are many more issues Kiger said he wants to discuss with the public that he sees as critical concerns and why the city needs to act right now on a plan to fix this problem once and for all.

Kiger said he will wait until the town hall on Thursday to lay out “most” of the plan that he believes will get the attention of city leaders to start hearing the voices of the citizens they represent.

“If city leaders don’t hear the voices of their citizens, then I believe everything is on the table to pressure the city to take action,” Kiger said. “I will use everything at my disposal as a state representative to make something happen for these people.”

Kiger said this isn’t what he wants to see happen, but he believes it’s what it will take for the city to get moving and for people living in that community to get what they are paying for in receiving clean water.

Kiger went on to say, “Until the city sees they are at possible significant financial risk from the different state and federal agencies, I don’t believe anything will ever change in the city making the needed investments and improvements because it hasn’t over the many decades of their citizens complaining.”

“With these groups represented and hearing the complaints and concerns of so many people and businesses, it has to help in resolving this terrible situation for this community,” Kiger said.
New scam alert: Medicare fraud

By Glen Mulready
Oklahoma Insurance Commissioner

Over the last 25 years, we’ve witnessed amazing advances in science and medicine. What was once thought impossible is now being accomplished. Genetic testing is one example. With a small sample of saliva, your risk for certain diseases can be predicted. Unfortunately, just as technology has evolved with these tests, so have the opportunities for scammers.

This month, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General sent out an alert about fraud schemes involving genetic or DNA testing. These scams have been targeting Medicare beneficiaries through phone calls, booths at public events, health fairs and door-to-door visits.

A typical scheme might go something like this: A scammer offers free ice cream or gift cards at a retirement community, senior nutrition center or Medicare expo for anyone who listens to a pitch about free DNA testing. It’s important to know: Medicare will pay for genetic testing for patients with advanced cancer or a family history of certain types of cancer if the test is medically necessary and is ordered by a treating physician. The fraudster will usually downplay or even ignore the medical necessity criteria and the need for a doctor’s order.

The scammer may swab a person’s cheek right there to collect saliva and gather identifying information, such as a person’s name, date of birth and Medicare number. Medicare beneficiaries have also been sent genetic testing kits and asked to return the completed kit with their insurance information. This is so the scammer can bill Medicare thousands of dollars of expensive and medically unnecessary genetic testing.

How do you tell the difference between a genuine, medically-necessary genetic test and these fraud schemes? Talk to YOUR doctor about it. This is the person with whom you’ve placed your trust regarding your healthcare.

Here are some things you can do to protect yourself from this scheme:

- If a genetic testing kit is mailed to you, don’t accept it unless it was ordered by your doctor. Refuse the delivery or return it to the sender. Keep a record of the sender’s name and the date you returned the items.
- Be suspicious of anyone who offers free genetic testing and requests your Medicare number. If your personal information is compromised, it may be used in other fraud schemes.
- Look for charges on your Medicare Summary Notice statements for unnecessary tests or screenings that you did not want or were not ordered by your doctor.

If you suspect that you’ve been a victim of this scam or any Medicare fraud, report it. Call the Oklahoma Insurance Department’s Medicare Assistance Program at 800-763-2828.

About the Oklahoma Insurance Department
The Oklahoma Insurance Department, an agency of the State of Oklahoma, is responsible for the education and protection of the insurance-buying public and for oversight of the insurance industry in the state.
Town Hall for water issues

Kiger calls for action on Heavener water

District 3 State Rep. Lundy Kiger, R-Poteau, announced Monday plans to hold a Heavener town hall water meeting this Thursday.

The meeting is set at 11 a.m. at the Heavener Public Library. Residents should watch Facebook for any changes.

“I look forward to sharing my concerns and want to hear your concerns as well to try and get a complete picture of how bad water quality and outages are for the residents,” Kiger said.

Heavener city leaders were unavailable at press time to comment on Kiger’s statements.

It is open to the public. Kiger said he will lay out a plan to work with the city for water improvements and take comments for a data base.

Kiger plans to invite or include state and federal agencies over the next two weeks.

These include officials from the Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality, the Oklahoma Insurance Commission, the Oklahoma Corporation Commission, the Oklahoma Department of Health, the Attorney General’s Office, as well as people from the offices of Oklahoma U.S. Rep. Markwayne Mullin and Oklahoma U.S. Sens. James Lankford and Jim Inhofe.

See Water, Page 6A
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Kiger said his hope is that city leaders listens to what he is hearing and make the decision to do the right thing and lay out an immediate plan to secure funding to replace their piping and any water treatment equipment needed to meet state and federal regulations.

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The American Red Cross hosted a Multi-Agency Disaster Relief Center on Saturday June 29 at the First Christian Church in Guthrie. The event was open for six hours to anyone affected by the May floods. There were over 12 different organizations present to aid those in need. The turnout was lower than expected according to the event organizers. FEMA reported that 102 residents have currently applied for assistance and 64 of those requests have been processed.

The Red Cross reported that seven have reached the level of assistance as of Saturday morning and that there were another 15 families with minor issues. Besides the Red Cross, Neighborhood Solutions, the United Way, Legal Aid, the Oklahoma Insurance Department, Catholic Charities, the Knights of Columbus, the Episcopal Relief and Development Agency, 21st Century Santa Organization, the Salvation Army and the St. Vincent DePaul Society were among the groups available to help. Residents who still need help can still reach out to FEMA 940-898-5454 or the Red Cross 405-282-1194 to get some help.

Organizations aid disaster victims

By Mike Monahan
Guthrie News Leader
gnlnews@yahoo.com

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$5.1 million recovered for Oklahomans in 2019

OKLAHOMA CITY – In the first six months of 2019, the Oklahoma Insurance Department recovered double the amount of money for policyholders compared to all of last year. More than $5.1 million in claims disputes have been settled with the Department’s help. “These recovery amounts make a real impact on peoples’ lives, and Oklahomans should expect their insurance companies to keep the promises made to them” Oklahoma Insurance Commissioner Glen Mulready said. “Today’s numbers show our Department’s continued commitment to protect insurance consumers.” OID’s Consumer Assistance/Claims Division processes and assist consumers seeking help with their insurance companies. The division opened 3,061 files from January to June of this year. They’ve also answered 7,110 phone calls. The money recovered from January to June of this year totaled $5,129,962.81. Last year, the recovery amount for the entire year was $3,549,619.17. Policyholders who have an issue with their claim can file a “Request for Assistance” for the following types of insurance: auto, home, commercial, life and health, service warranty, title or workers’ compensation. To learn more about the complaint process, go to oid.ok.gov or call the Consumer Assistance Division at 800-522-0071.

About the Oklahoma Insurance Department

The Oklahoma Insurance Department, an agency of the State of Oklahoma, is responsible for the education and protection of the insurance-buying public and for oversight of the insurance industry in the state.
By Glen Mulready
Oklahoma Insurance Commissioner

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OKLAHOMA CITY – The Oklahoma Insurance Department recovered $5.1 million for policyholders during the first six months of 2019, compared with $3.5 million for all of 2018.

“These recovery amounts make a real impact on people’s lives, and Oklahomans should expect their insurance companies to keep the promises made to them,” Oklahoma Insurance Commissioner Glen Mulready said.

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Policyholders who have an issue with their claim can file a request for assistance for vehicle, home, commercial, life and health, service warranty, title or workers’ compensation insurance.

To file for assistance, call 1-800-522-0233 or visit www.insurance.ok.gov. Then-state Rep. Glen Mulready speaks during a committee meeting in Oklahoma City. Mulready is now Oklahoma insurance commissioner.

–Staff report