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MAY 27 2025

MARY JO SPINO
COUNTY CLERK

dch 4:40pm SJ

VETO MESSAGE

FROM

**THE JACKSON COUNTY
EXECUTIVE**

RETURNING WITHOUT MY APPROVAL
ORDINANCE #5909 REGARDING THE
PROPOSED CHARTER AMENDMENT TO
ELECT THE COUNTY ASSESSOR.

May 27, 2025

VETO — ORDINANCE #5909



FRANK WHITE, JR.
Jackson County Executive

Frank White, Jr
Jackson County Executive
415 E 12th St
Kansas City, MO

The Honorable Members of the Jackson County Legislature
415 E. 12th Street
Kansas City, Missouri 64106

RE: Veto of Ordinance No. 5909 — Proposed Charter Amendment to Elect the County Assessor

May 27, 2025

Dear Honorable Legislators,

After careful review and serious consideration, I am formally vetoing Ordinance No. 5909, which proposes submitting to the voters a charter amendment converting the Jackson County Assessor from a qualified appointee to an elected position.

This decision is not driven by opposition to voter choice but by a deep commitment to common-sense governance, fiscal responsibility, and sound public policy. Below, I outline the strongest reasons why this ordinance, as currently written, does not serve the best interests of the people of Jackson County.

1. The \$1 Million Price Tag Is Unbudgeted and Unnecessary This Year

The proposed ballot measure would be placed on the August 2025 primary ballot—an election the County would likely have to fully fund at an estimated cost exceeding \$1 million. None of this expense has been budgeted in our 2025 financial plan. Committing over \$1 million of unallocated taxpayer funds this year, for a change that wouldn't take effect until 2029, simply doesn't make sense. Jackson County residents deserve careful, responsible budgeting that prioritizes essential services and infrastructure over unnecessary, early elections.

2. Statewide Action Is Already Underway — Acting Now Creates Confusion

Importantly, the State of Missouri is currently scheduled to place a statewide constitutional question regarding the election of assessors on the November 2026 ballot (House Joint Resolution 36). If Jackson County pushes forward with its own separate question on the August 2025 ballot, we risk creating unnecessary voter confusion, duplicative processes, and mixed public messaging.

There is no legal or operational need to act before the November statewide election. By waiting until after the state question is resolved, we can align our local efforts, avoid wasting taxpayer dollars, and ensure voters have clear, coordinated, and informed options. If the Legislature agrees to place this question on the August 2026 or November 2026 ballot, I will fully support budgeting the necessary funds in the next fiscal cycle. This still provides ample time for an election and implementation prior to 2029.

3. The Proposed Amendment Lacks Professional Safeguards and Misstates the Assessor's Role

Perhaps most concerning, the proposed charter amendment includes no professional qualifications or experience requirements for candidates seeking to serve as County Assessor. As written, any individual, regardless of their training, certification, or understanding of complex property assessment practices, could appear on the ballot and potentially win this vital position.

Even more troubling, the proposed language inaccurately describes the role of the assessor as responsible for “efficient, effective, and predictable taxation.” This is a fundamental misstatement. The assessor is not responsible for setting or collecting taxes; the assessor’s constitutional duty is to ensure accurate, fair, and uniform property assessments so that taxation is applied equitably by the appropriate taxing authorities.

It is unacceptable to alter the structure of a technical, expertise-driven office like the Assessor without at minimum ensuring that professional standards and a clear, accurate definition of duties are incorporated. Doing otherwise places the integrity of our assessment system—and public trust—at risk.

Conclusion

For these reasons, I respectfully veto Ordinance No. 5909.

I urge the Legislature to work with me on a more responsible, coordinated path forward:

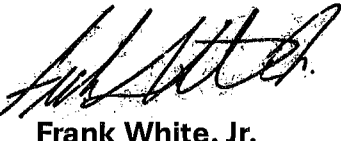
- Waiting until after the November 2026 statewide election
- Budgeting funds appropriately for the 2026 ballot

- Ensuring any proposed change includes the professional safeguards and accurate job descriptions that our residents deserve

Let us show the people of Jackson County that we value their input and their tax dollars—that we will place important issues on the ballot, but only in a thoughtful, informed, and fiscally sound manner.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and your continued commitment to serving the people of Jackson County.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Frank White, Jr.", with a long horizontal line extending to the left.

Frank White, Jr.
County Executive
Jackson County, Missouri

**VETOED BY COUNTY EXECUTIVE
May 27, 2025**

IN THE COUNTY LEGISLATURE OF JACKSON COUNTY, MISSOURI

AN ORDINANCE submitting to the qualified voters of Jackson County, Missouri, at the primary election to be held on August 5, 2025, a question to amend the Jackson County Charter, with an effective date.

ORDINANCE NO. 5909, December 9, 2024

INTRODUCED BY Manuel Abarca IV, Venessa Huskey, and Sean E. Smith, County Legislators

BE IT ORDAINED by the County Legislature of Jackson County, Missouri, as follows:

Section 1. There is hereby submitted to the qualified voters of Jackson County, Missouri for approval or disapproval one question to amend the 2018 Jackson County Charter, as set forth in this Ordinance, at the primary election to be held in Jackson County, Missouri, on the first Tuesday in August 2025.

Section 2. Subject to the approval of the qualified voters of Jackson County, Missouri, at the primary election to be held on August 5, 2025, the 2018 Jackson County Charter is hereby amended with amended sections to read as follows:

ARTICLE III.

COUNTY EXECUTIVE

Section 6. The County Executive, in addition to other powers and duties provided in this charter, shall have the power to:

1. Appoint, subject to the County Legislature's power of disapproval, directors of departments, officers not otherwise provided for, members of boards

and commissions, and acting officers to fill any vacancy in any appointive or elective office, except that of County Legislator; the County Executive shall file written notice of such appointments with the Clerk of the County Legislature.

2. Employ experts and consultants in connection with any of the functions of the county, and ensure that all professional services contracts over \$5,000, except in emergency situations, follow a competitive process to determine award of the contract.

3. Coordinate and supervise the work of the departments, officers and agencies of the county subject to his or her control.

4. Transfer employees from one department to another department to promote efficiency and economy. If the employee reports to the County Legislature, Sheriff, Prosecuting Attorney, Assessor, or Circuit Court, the transfer shall require the approval of the Legislature, applicable office holder or presiding judge of the Circuit Court.

5. Execute and enforce the provisions of this charter, and the ordinances, resolutions and policies of the County Legislature, and the laws of the state pertaining to the government of the county; see that all contracts with the county are faithfully performed and cause to be instituted in the name of the county appropriate actions thereon.

6. Attend meetings of the County Legislature and participate in its discussions without vote.

7. Recommend to the County Legislature such measures as may, in his or

her opinion, tend to improve the county government and the general well-being of the people; submit to the County Legislature an annual report of the affairs of the county; promote, encourage and participate in cooperative relationships between the county and political subdivisions and governmental bodies and agencies, either within or outside the county or state in matters relating to public health, ecology, highways, sewers, parks, safety, public welfare, and any and all other functions for the welfare of the people of Jackson County.

8. Investigate any matter or circumstance having to do with the operation of the county government, and examine witnesses, parties and others on oath or affirmation touching any matter or circumstance in the examination of any payroll, account, demand or claim against the county, and have access to all county books, records and papers kept by county officers and employees.

[9. Correct errors in assessment and tax records.]

[10] 9. Represent the county and perform such other duties as may be prescribed by this charter or be required of the County Executive by ordinance or resolution of the County Legislature or as may be implied by the powers and duties specified in this charter, law or county ordinance.

[11] 10. Establish by County Executive order from time-to-time systems of administrative organization in the departments which shall be as uniform as the various departmental functions will permit.

[12] 11. Submit to the County Legislature for approval by ordinance an annual balanced budget at the time and in the manner provided in this charter and

by county ordinance.

ARTICLE IV.
DEPARTMENTS

Section 5. The County Executive shall assign all duties and functions prescribed by law or this charter for [the county assessor,] the county collector, and the county treasurer.

ARTICLE V.
CHARTER OFFICERS
ASSESSOR

Section 16. Effective January 1, 2027, the Assessor shall be elected at the general election in 2028, and every four years thereafter. The Assessor shall take office on January 1 following his or her election. The Assessor shall be a qualified voter, and shall have been domiciled in the county for at least three years before assuming office. No Assessor may serve more than three consecutive full terms commencing on or after January 1, 2029. The Assessor shall forfeit office if they:

1. Ceases to be a qualified voter of the County;
2. Removes his or her residence from the county;
3. Holds any other federal, state, county, or municipal elective office;
4. Owes federal income tax, Missouri state income tax, or Missouri local

tax which remains unpaid for more than twelve months after such tax debt becomes final under the law of the jurisdiction assessing such tax, unless a payment plan to resolve such delinquency is in effect and is current on its terms.

The Assessor shall be in charge of and responsible for the Division of Assessment. The Assessor shall possess and exercise all the powers and duties given by law, charter and ordinance to the County Assessor and shall perform such other duties and exercise such other powers relative thereto as are provided by law, charter and ordinance. The assessor shall be responsible and accountable for efficient, effective and predictable taxation within the County, as well as responsive to taxing jurisdictions. The assessor will, if requested, report at least quarterly to the Legislature the plans, outcomes, and anomalies of the assessment, making themselves available and responsive to legislative and executive communications.

Section 3. The qualified voters at said election shall vote by ballot and the ballots to be used at said election shall contain the following language:

JACKSON COUNTY, MISSOURI

**QUESTION # 1
GENERAL ELECTION
AUGUST 5, 2025
OFFICIAL BALLOT**

Shall Articles III, IV, and V of the Jackson County Charter, adopted by vote on November 3, 1970, and as amended by public votes on August 8, 1978,

April 2, 1985, November 4, 1986, August 2, 1994, August 3, 2010, and November 6, 2018 be amended to require that the Charter Office of the Jackson County Assessor no longer be a qualified appointee and instead be an elected position?

YES ☐

NO ☐

If you are in favor of the question, place an "x" in the box opposite "Yes."

If you are opposed to the question, place an "x" in the box opposite "No."

Section 4. If a majority of the qualified voters at said election shall vote in favor of the approval of any ballot question submitted by this Ordinance, the amended provisions related to that ballot question shall be binding and shall become effective January 1, 2027, subject to any transition provisions contained herein.

Section 5. The Clerk of the Legislature is hereby authorized and directed to notify the Jackson County and Kansas City Boards of Election Commissioners of the adoption of this Ordinance no later than 5 p.m. on May 27, 2025, and to include in said notification all of the terms and provisions required by 115.125, RSMo.

Effective Date: This ordinance shall be effective upon its signature by the County Executive, and in accordance with Section 4 hereof.

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

Bryan Covinsky
Bryan Covinsky (Dec 9, 2024 12:20 CST)
County Counselor

I hereby certify that the attached Ordinance, Ordinance No. 5909 introduced on December 9, 2024, was duly passed on May 16, 2024 by the Jackson County Legislature. The votes thereon were as follows: 5

Yeas	<u>5</u>	Nays	<u>2</u>
Abstaining	<u>1</u>	Absent	<u>0</u>
	Excused	<u>1</u>	

This Ordinance is hereby transmitted to the County Executive for his signature.

5.16.2025
Date

Mary Jo Spino
Mary Jo Spino, Clerk of Legislature

I hereby approve the attached Ordinance No.5909.

Date

VETOED BY COUNTY EXECUTIVE
May 27, 2025

Frank White, Jr., County Executive