

STATEMENT BY PRESIDING COMMISSIONER NOLTE ON THE STATE AUDIT OF CLAY COUNTY

Clay County Presiding Commissioner Jerry Nolte is deeply concerned about several official communications from Clay County on the 2019 Missouri State Audit of Clay County and subsequent legal actions. Also, disturbing is the potentially misleading statements mischaracterizing the Presiding Commissioner's opinions as well as the hostile and confrontational language used in these communications. To be clear, Presiding Commissioner Nolte was not consulted with regard to these statements, did not authorize these statements, and does not agree with these statements. Therefore, Presiding Commissioner Nolte has directed county staff to cease using inclusive terms that strongly imply unanimity that may potentially misrepresent his views in reference to the Missouri State Audit and related legal actions. Presiding Commissioner Nolte's statement is as follows;

"I have consistently been in favor of the State of Missouri's audit of Clay County. I support the county withdrawing the lawsuits and having a real dialogue with the state audit team on cooperating to facilitate an efficient and comprehensive audit. I did not have the opportunity to review the press releases and official statements on the state audit before they were distributed, nor was my input or opinion sought. I don't know if the Associate Commissioners had the opportunity to approve these communications in advance. The views expressed in these official statements and press releases purported to represent actions and positions of the Clay County Commission do not represent my views.

I have directed staff to no longer represent these opinions as if they were the unanimous positions of the County Commission. This practice could be construed as misleading and an attempt to misrepresent my views to the public. I am also highly concerned by the escalating hostile tone of these communications which seem to have taken a path of personal attacks. This approach is not productive nor does it indicate a sincere effort to cooperate with the State Audit. I vigorously disagree with the actions of the Associate Commissioners to spend what will be hundreds of thousands of taxpayers' dollars to fight an audit that citizens initiated.

At the February 11, 2019 open Clay County Commission meeting, I attempted to discuss both my Resolution of Cooperation with the State Auditor and solutions to the flawed method of releasing information to the press and public to stop the spread of potentially inaccurate information. County Staff denied placement of the Resolution of Cooperation on the Commission Agenda for discussion. Approximately a year ago Commissioners Ridgeway and Owen passed ordinance to not allow a Commissioner to place an item on the Commission Meeting Agenda without the approval of County Staff. The Press Release resolution was placed on the agenda, but removed by Associate Commissioner Gene Owen with the support of Associate Commissioner Luann Ridgeway, blocking any discussion or debate of the issue. These actions are consistent with a disturbing and ongoing pattern of behavior by Commissioners Owen and Ridgeway to suppress dissenting views by both elected officials and citizens. This further undermines the confidence people have in county officials by creating the appearance that there is something to hide. A comprehensive audit of county operations is needed to help alleviate those fears. The people expect and deserve open government and the responsible use of their tax money by elected officials, these issues in large part prompted citizens to demand this State Audit in the first place."

Clay County Presiding Commissioner Jerry Nolte