

Here's the latest from Day 3 of a preliminary hearing for 3 of the 4 murder defendants in the North Topeka triple homicide (<http://cjonline.com/news/homicides/crime-courts/2017-09-27/prosecutor-self-preservation-doesnt-excuse-shane-mays-blame>)



(/)

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Kansas Democratic chairman Larry Meeker resigns after rebranding remark

Meeker made comments about rebranding the state party's message to emphasize it is more conservative than the national party



Kansas Democratic Party Chairman Larry Meeker speaks with reporters in March. Meeker resigned Friday amid a backlash over comments he made about rebranding the state party's message to emphasize it is more conservative than the national party.

The Kansas Democratic Party's chairman resigned Friday after less than six months on the job due to consternation with his proposal to brand the state's minority party in a way that appealed more to Republicans.

Larry Meeker, who formally steps aside Monday after this weekend's DemoFest activities in Wichita, said his proposal to cast the state's party as a conservative version of national Democratic icons Barack Obama, Nancy Pelosi and Harry Reid had proved too great a distraction.

"My priorities may be diverting us from our primary goal of electing Democrats and restoring common sense to Kansas government," Meeker said. "My time as chair has been personally rewarding and has fostered many new friendships."

Meeker, a former mayor of the Lake Quivira community in Johnson County, was selected chairman in March following the retirement of Joan Wagnon, who led the organization through difficult election cycles in 2012 and 2014.

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Ouster petition aimed at Kansas Democratic Party official exposes raw internal conflicts (<http://cjonline.com/state-government/2016-elections/news/2017-09-20/ouster-petition-aimed-kansas-democratic-party>)

Tour convinces Democratic governor candidate Svaty of need to unify Kansans (<http://cjonline.com/state-government/2016-elections/news/2017-09-27/tour-convinces-democratic-governor-candidate-svaty>)

Kathryn Focke, of Manhattan, will serve as interim party chairwoman. She is the state organization's vice chairwoman.

Kerry Gooch, executive director of the state Democratic Party, said he respected Meeker's decision to put the party first. He said in a statement that it has been a "pleasure working with Larry."

Meeker ruffled feathers in the past week by telling The Wichita Eagle that he was "looking to re-message how we speak about our party and our issues." He complained Kansas Republicans roast Democrats with rhetoric about Pelosi, Reid, Obama and "anything bad they can figure out going on in Washington, and the Republicans brand us."

"That's not who we are," he told the newspaper. "Kansas Democrats are very different from Massachusetts Democrats or California Democrats."

Kelly Arnold, chairman of the Kansas Republican Party, said Meeker appeared interested in emphasizing the inclusive nature of the Democratic Party.

"He's been proven wrong on both counts. It's a far-left party and they do not tolerate dissent," Arnold said.

He said DemoFest 2015 was shaping up to be a "political circus." The state Democratic Party is involved in a "savage internal struggle over the ideological identity and tactical direction" of the political organization, he said.



Meeker, who ran unsuccessfully for the Kansas House in 2012 and 2014, is a former vice president for the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City. In March, he was selected by the Democratic State Committee to serve a two-year term as chairman.

Kansas Democrats name ex-KC Fed official as new chairman (/news-state/2015-03-07/kansas-democrats-name-ex-kc-fed-official-new-chairman)

24-year-old Kerry Gooch announced as new executive director for Kansas Democratic party (/news-legislature-local-state/2015-05-05/24-year-old-kerry-gooch-announced-new-executive-director)

Dozens of Kansas legislators violate no-tax pledges (/legislature-state/2015-06-14/dozens-kansas-legislators-violate-no-tax-pledges)

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