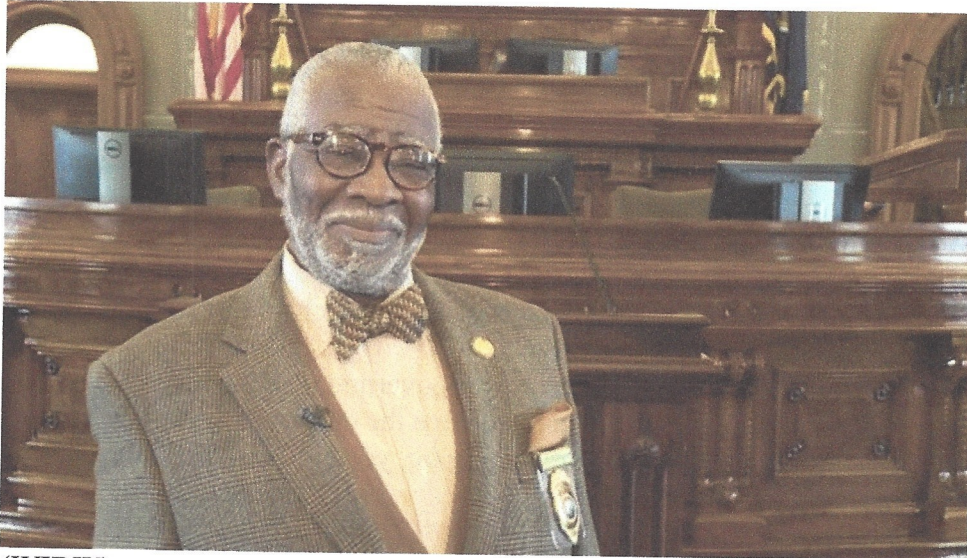


Living history, the Kansas House Sergeant-at-Arms



(WIBW)

By Shawn Wheat

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There are several rules when you step into the House chambers at the capitol. Those rules are enforced by a select group of dedicated public servants, who take their jobs very seriously. The man in charge of that group, is a man who has seen and experienced so much in his lifetime.

"I understand that some of those guys may have been Sergeant-at-Arms. I'm not sure, but they're not like they are today," Kansas House of Representatives Sergeant-at-Arms, Foster Chisholm, guards the House with a watchful eye. That's a bit different from his predecessors during the legislative war of 1893.

"These doors were knocked down. These door, they've got them at the historical society," Chisholm pointed out.

These days, the Sergeant-at-Arms no longer carries a musket.

"Our main duty is to decorum of the House. To make sure people are respecting the House. Being where they should be. Doing what they should do and not disrupting the session as it's going on."

Chisholm takes great pride in his job. It's his second career. His first, was as a mail handler at the historic post office downtown.

"That building there was where the Brown vs Board of education case was, and it's always important for me to be there at that building. That was one of the reasons I enjoyed working

there at that building,” Chisholm said, and then looked around the room he was in at the time. “This building here, it’s the state capitol. I mean, how could you not be proud of working at the state capitol?”

Chisholm was 12-years-old when the Brown vs. Board decision was made. He attended McKinley School, a segregated school in North Topeka. Living through that time he knows firsthand the importance of teaching the younger generation about what happened.

“I should share what we have been through. Share the struggles that the African American community had been through. Along with that, I should tell them about the gains we have made, and then what we can do to progress to keep going forward,” he said with pride.

Going forward for him means knowing what’s happening in the government. He says many people have lost sight that they have a stake in what happens in the chambers he protects.

“You’re a Kansan. You should know what’s going on in your government. You may have some input. If there’s something that you like or dislike, then you have the opportunity to share that with your Representative. But if you don’t know what’s going on, you couldn’t do that very well,” Chisholm said with authority.

Chisholm loves what he does, and plans to do it as long as he’s asked.

“If the speaker appoints me, I’ll be here,” he smiled.

When the legislature is not in session, he likes to travel. Recently he’s started visiting other state capitols and says Kansas’ is the most beautiful one he’s ever seen.