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**AG Derek Schmidt, Johnson and Sedgwick County DAs propose strengthening elder abuse laws**

TOPEKA – (January 5, 2018) – Kansas Attorney General Derek Schmidt, Johnson County District Attorney Stephen Howe and Sedgwick County District Attorney Marc Bennett today announced that they plan to ask the Kansas Legislature to strengthen the state’s laws against elder abuse during the 2018 legislative session, which begins next week.

Schmidt, Howe and Bennett said their proposal would expand the definition of criminal mistreatment of an elder person to include infliction of physical injury, unreasonable confinement or unreasonable punishment. It would also include violations of the guardian or conservator laws. The current statute prohibits financial abuse but not physical abuse.

“As the population of senior citizens in Kansas continues to increase, we need to update our laws,” Schmidt said. “It is important that our prosecutors have tools available to them to successfully prosecute those who take advantage of or abuse Kansas seniors.”

As of 2015, Kansas is home to about 397,000 people age 65 and older, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. A Wichita State University study projects that population to more than double over the next 50 years.

“This legislative proposal will strengthen our ability to protect some of the most vulnerable members of our community and hold their abusers accountable,” Howe said.

“Sedgwick County was pleased to contribute to this important legislation that will serve to enhance the safety of Kansas seniors,” Bennett said.

Schmidt is currently serving as president of the National Association of Attorneys General. During his presidency, the organization is focusing on helping states gather expertise and build capacity to fight elder abuse, neglect and exploitation. Schmidt will host a national summit on the issue in Manhattan in April.

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