



THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS  
OF TOPEKA/SHAWNEE COUNTY

**VOTER**

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## February 2005

### 1 Tuesday Topics - Lunch 11:30 am

Anne Freeze, Administrator, Shawnee County Health Department, speaking on "The Status of Health in Shawnee County"

*Our meal is Build Your Own Mexican salad, brownie, water and iced tea.*

### 8 LWVT/SC Board Meeting - Members welcome

5:30 pm, O'Dooley's, 1930 Westport Dr. (north of Petsmart on Westport Dr.)

### 17 VOICE Meeting - Joint meeting at McFarland's, 5:30 PM for dinner followed by a discussion of Juvenile Justice consensus questions.



## Guess who has joined the LWVK Board of Directors?

Janis McMillen, State League President, has invited **Mary Ann Bradford** to serve as Secretary for the state board until the end of the League year in April 2005. Her term includes three LWVK board meetings in January and March at the State League Office and the pre-convention board meeting and State Convention in April at Salina. Mary Ann will continue to serve on the Board of Directors of LWVTSC.

Our **Annual Meeting** will be held on **Saturday, April 2**. Mark your calendar now! We will have election of officers, budget discussion and vote, and agree on studies for future study at that time. *Details will be included in your March VOTER.*



## Tuesday Topics

January Tuesday Topics will be held in room **JCM 101B**, across from the Millennium Cafe at the Topeka-Shawnee County Public Library. Meals are available to the first twenty-five arriving, @ \$8.25/ea. **If you need a ride to any League event, contact Betsy Rohleder.**

*The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in government, works to increase understanding of public issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.*



## JUST ONE NEW ACTIVITY

...Making a New Year's Resolution a Successful one!

**L**et's face it, **New Year's Resolutions** are as much a part of the holidays as watching the ball drop in Times Square, visiting family, investing for the future, participating in things for which we have a passion (League of Women Voters??), and for many of us, putting on a few extra pounds. Although we resolve to lose those few extra pounds, try a new hobby, volunteer for a committee or leadership position, invest more consistently, or take better care of ourselves, few of us really create the necessary guidelines and stick to them!

My suggestion, as it relates to League of Women Voters? Make 2005 a great year by resolving to do **ONE NEW** thing for your League...such as, but not limited to:

- Volunteering to call others for action alerts or meetings.
- Saying YES when asked to assist on a committee
- Writing or calling your legislator to inform her/him of your position.
- Attending a VOICE meeting—the backbone of our organization for member input and decision making regarding programs and studies.
- Offering to help with one-time committees (Annual meeting, Member event, Budget committee, or Legislative Issues dinner).
- Testifying for the League—City Council or County Commission. The Action/Alert committee can assist by providing written testimony in line with our LWVTSC positions.
- Recruiting one new member and informally mentoring through the year in order to get her/him involved and participating.
- Donating your time, expertise, or resources to the local League activity which means the most to you (putting your mouth where your passion lies).

- Now, how to accomplish this **one new** activity?
- Write it down in big letters at the top of the January calendar that you use.
  - Do it NOW! (Get it out of the way.) (Don't procrastinate.)
  - If you don't do it in January, tell yourself it's okay, but put it on your calendar and do it soon.
  - Give yourself a pat on the back when you have "taken the step"—doing something you've promised to yourself is very rewarding.
  - Remember that we all have 24 hours in our day—there may be specific things that take up most of your time, but if you really have a passion for the group you will usually find that extra hour or day that you can give back to the League. The difference in the long run to our group can be substantial. Make the time happen; only you can control the time that you give yourself!
  - Stay in touch with what the League (National-State-Local) is doing. The success of activities in election years must be planned for in non-election years—thus, the need for involvement in Voter activities throughout each year.
  - Don't lose sight of what we stand for...keep an eye on your publications, legislators, and activities of the local League. Good or bad, stay involved!

So as you create your own list of New Year's Resolutions take a few moments and create some for our League as well. And, as you make these decisions, why not give me or any of your Board members a call so we can assess your goals together as well? As a team, we'll be able to better stay on track in 2005 and help ensure the success and fun of belonging to the League of Women Voters of Topeka Shawnee County.

May your goals for 2005 be your minimum achievements!

— *Betsy Rohleder*

# Tuesday Topics for January

## “The Future of School Finance”

**Jim Edwards**, Governmental Relations Specialist with the Kansas School Board

**Jim Edwards** has been with the Kansas School Board for three years. Prior to that time he worked for the Kansas Chamber of Commerce and Industry for many years. Before that, he worked for a variety of local Chambers. School financing has been at issue throughout his career.

Evaluation of state education changed drastically in 1992 with focus on QPA, Quality Performance Accreditation: pressing students to meet graduation standards and teachers and administrators to meet higher standards of performance.

Why the change?

First, the national economy called for higher job skills. Unskilled jobs were disappearing--moving to foreign countries.

Secondly, our state needed to entice businesses. Kansas has no mountains or ocean beaches to attract skilled workers from elsewhere.

Third, student needs were changing. Kansas had more poor students and more students for which English was a second language.

The federal legislature mandated the No Child Left Behind Act and other national standards.

Another factor for change was the IDA, Individuals with Disabilities Act. Children with learning disabilities were living longer and expecting help from schools. The IDA created health, nutrition and safety standards in working in schools with the disabled.

“Suitability” in education was defined by the national Legislature in 2001, before consultants

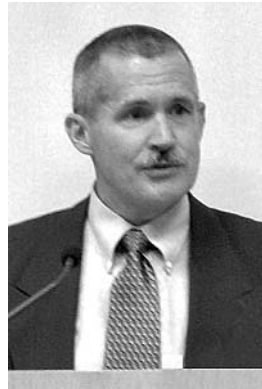
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**The Individuals with Disabilities Act created health, nutrition and safety standards in working in schools with the disabled.**

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were tapped to help create QPA legislation. As a result, the Kansas legislature changed school degree requirements and educator and administrator standards. The business community and the

Kansas Chamber of Commerce and Industry lobbied for the higher standards to meet the needs of the future. They also believed that higher standards in education create responsible citizens, ones more likely to become involved in key ways in the activities of our state.



**Jim Edwards**

Since QPA took effect in 1992 there has been a spike in student achievement and the achievement gap has narrowed in years since. Kansas ranks eighth in national reading and math scores. Two years ago Kansas ranked fifth. Our students are not doing worse, but other states are catching up in performance. Kansas spent the *least* per student last year of the top ten performers, yet dollars spent and performance run almost parallel. Our state's SAT and ACT scores have also improved.

Kansas' workforce skills are one of the state's best-kept secrets. Employer satisfaction is at its highest level. Sixty-five to seventy percent of test-takers are performing at an acceptable rate. Two groups needing more help to achieve standards



include those students needing to learn English and also students with disabilities. The solution is *not* to keep these people out of our school system but, rather, to help them succeed.

What needs to be done? The Kansas School Board endorses a “suitable” education for all Kansas students. They support well-rounded students. Business wants well-rounded students as employees. The KSB recommends a reduction in the amount of local testing and unnecessary paperwork. Eliminate needless reports.

Consolidation is happening and will continue to happen in Kansas, and it will come from local mandates. There are now 301 local school boards. Ten years ago there were 311. Next year there will be 299. An estimated \$200,000,000 can be saved in duplicated services BUT transportation and combining expenses will eat some of that savings.

Timing is everything when con- —continued on p. 4

## Tuesday Topics for January, cont.

sidering consolidation. Rules of programming in sports playoffs are a real roadblock to combining districts. Each local school is reluctant to give up the opportunity to bring home sports trophies.

Teacher compensation should be performance-based; not in all cases, but in more of them. Teacher tenure and school administrations are not issues. Schools are about as streamlined as they can get. Managers are about 9% of staff in professional businesses. In our schools, administrators are 8%.

School budgets were among last year's legislative issues. The KSB supports professional development for the state's school board members and recommends cooperation and consolidation among schools. Judge Bullock originally dismissed financing as an issue, finding financing both adequate and equal, but the State Supreme Court overruled his decision and asked Bullock to look again at financing.

The KSB strongly agrees with key points of the recent judgement. In 2001 just less than \$600 was spent per pupil and that amount should have been just less than \$800 per pupil. But the court did not look at \$500,000,000 spent in discretionary district funds. These funds were to be spent on new and innovative instruction but now, rather, are spent just to squeak by.

Last year's legislature looked to spend \$82,000,000 of highway improvement funds on schools but highway contractors rallied to squelch that deal. Teachers' salaries are 85% to 89% of the total financing needed. The money needs to come from somewhere, and April 1 is the deadline for finding a solution. School financing used to come from property taxes. Perhaps a sales tax is the current solution.

The dropout rate is now lower than in times when many League members were in school. The next big issue will probably be a potential teacher shortage, as current teachers retire.

There is a disconnect between this issue and voters. Seventy-five percent of Americans have no child or grandchild currently enrolled in school, so voters are less motivated to pay for a solution.

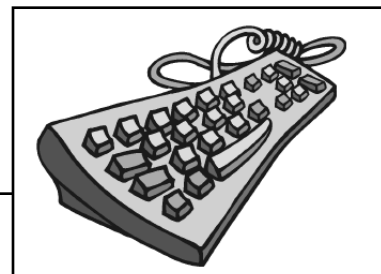
The KSB web site includes public records of 2003-04 financial reports from the state's 301 school districts, by name:  
[http://www.ksde.org/leaf/current\\_expend/coe.html](http://www.ksde.org/leaf/current_expend/coe.html)



### **Citizens Building Communities: *The ABCs of Public Dialogue***

The LWVEF released a new publication, **Citizens Building Communities: The ABCs of Public Dialogue**, in January. It provides an overview of new dialogue models to foster interaction between citizens and government. A copy will be sent to each League. Additional hard copies will also be available by contacting [pubsales@lwv.org](mailto:pubsales@lwv.org) and at <http://www.lwv.org/> for just \$4.95.

**A**nyone who uses e-mail and has not been hearing regularly from our local League is asked to send an e-mail message to **Nancy Kindling**, [nmkindling@aol.com](mailto:nmkindling@aol.com), to make an e-mail connection. Good national and state information is being shared via e-mail and we want to include as many members as possible. (League does not share e-mail addresses with other groups or individuals.)



## President's NOTES, LWVK Updates – by Janis McMillen, State President

**T**he Legislature opened its 2005 session on Monday, January 10. LWVK has planned to participate in rallies with the Coalition for Justice and Unity (religious issues) and with the Kansas Choice Alliance (Roe v. Wade) in January.

The State committee has sent out the **Juvenile Justice consensus questions**. The study committee will convene on Feb. 19 to draft the final consensus statements. Please return your League's consensus recommendations to Ellen Estes (efestes@cox.net; 125 Chelmsford, Wichita, KS 67230) by February 14.

Its not too early to mark your calendars for **Day at the Capitol**, which is scheduled for **Thursday, March 10**. Details about the day will be forthcoming. And there is still time to join the Lobby Corps for the 2005 Legislative Session. We need your help – please consider it!

**Election administration legislation** – I have had a conversation with Secretary of State Thornburgh, and asked his support for changing our statute to allow each county the option of split shifts for poll workers. This request is based on the position we developed following our state study on Election Administration. Currently, the statute requires poll workers to spend the entire day at the poll; yet, during our study we found that 3 counties acknowledged using split shifts. Sec. Thornburgh agreed to discuss with his staff then follow up with me. Hopefully, he will be supportive of this initiative.

Cristy Oller, the administrative assistant we have been sharing with Betsy Rohleder, has resigned her position. Betsy has hired a new assistant who began in early January.

### Annexation Committee Reports—

It's not too late to participate in the activities of the Annexation Committee. Learn with the rest of the committee members in preparation for the February 17th VOICE meeting at McFarland's Restaurant in Gage Center. The next committee meeting will be held on Tuesday, February 1st immediately following the Tuesday Topics. It will adjourn at 2:00 PM.

—submitted by *Mary Ann Bradford*



### Thank You to League Members

Special thanks to **Georgia Sandlin** for chairing the Budget committee—members **Jan Jacquith**, **Joe Sargent**, and **Sybil Wiegman**—met late in December to start the process! Thanks, too, to **Tom Leuke** for joining the group.

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**Mark Your Calendar: Sat., Apr. 2**  
**LWTSC Annual Meeting**  
 9:00 am, TSCPL, with a light brunch

Calendar .....1  
 Prez Sez .....2  
 Tuesday Topics Reports .....3 & 4  
 LWVK Updates .....5  
 Annexation Committee Reports .....5

**Inside**

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**February 2005**

**VOTTER**  
 OF TOPEKA/SHAWNEE COUNTY  
 THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS



**Mark your Calendar: Annual Meeting, Saturday A.M., April 2**  
*Agenda/meeting details are to be announced.*



Annual Meeting Speaker will be  
**Bill Lucero**, representing Murder Victims  
 Families for Reconciliation, an anti-death penalty  
 group.

**Feb. VOICE: "Annexation"**  
*A joint meeting at  
 McFarland's restaurant*

**YES!**

I want to add my voice to yours by joining the League of Women Voters. I enclose:  
 \$48 for 1-year Individual Membership     \$72 for a 1-year Household Membership  
 \$85 for a 1-year Sustaining Membership     Please send more information.  
 I am unable to join the League at this time, but enclose a contribution of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone (hm) \_\_\_\_\_ (wk) \_\_\_\_\_  
 E-Mail (for Action Alerts) \_\_\_\_\_

Please send to:  
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 785-478-1679

*Make checks payable to League of Women Voters of Topeka-Shawnee County*