



THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS
OF TOPEKA/SHAWNEE COUNTY

VOTER

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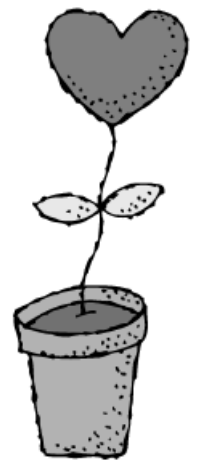
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February 2006

7 Tuesday Topics - Lunch 11:30 am,
“Preparing for Pandemic Flu”
by **Dr. Howard Rodenberg, KDHE Director of Health**
Our meal is Mexican Salad, Build Your Own, Brownie, & tea/coffee/water.

14 LWVT/SC Board Meeting - Members welcome
Noon, O’Dooley’s, 1930 Westport Dr.
(north of Petsmart on Westport Dr.)
(VOTER information is due for March VOTER. Send materials to **Carol Yoho:cyoho@cox.net**)



March 2006

7 Tuesday Topics - Lunch 11:30 am,
“Those Who Know: Consumers of Mental Health Services in Kansas.”
Panel discussion of service consumers.
Our meal is Chicken a la King on Pastry Shell, fruit cup, cookie, & tea/coffee/water.

14 LWVT/SC Board Meeting - Members welcome
Noon, O’Dooley’s, 1930 Westport Dr. (north of Petsmart on Westport Dr.)
(VOTER information is due for March VOTER. Send materials to **Carol Yoho:cyoho@cox.net**)

February Tuesday Topics

February 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.
Checks payable to the Millennium Cafe.
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.



PreZ SeZ...

Beginning 2006

As we begin the new year of 2006, it is good to reflect on where we have been and look forward to where we need to go.

We supported, or opposed as the case may be, several important issues this past year. We actively supported the city manager form of government for Topeka. That one passed, and we are now seeing those efforts come to fruition. Isn't that exciting?!!

We opposed the constitutional ban on same sex marriage and failed in that effort.

We supported the concept of city/county consolidation but the legislation spawning the consolidation commission was so badly flawed that a really good plan was difficult to produce. As you know that effort failed and the city and county governments are at status quo (except for the hiring of a city manager). This puts the city of Topeka back in the arena of annexation considerations.

Last fall, we completed a two year local league study on annexation, so we are in the process of sharing our well-studied wisdom with the city council, the county commission and the Shawnee County legislative delegation. We hope they will study our document and thoughtfully consider our suggestions.

In our future, we will have all new study topics. Your state topic study committee is getting ready to start our study of mental health services in Kansas. Watch for announcements of Voice meetings in future VOTERS.

In this issue, you have the opportunity to have input on a new local study issue. Please give us your best thoughts.

—Jan Waide



LWVUS Convention will be held in Minneapolis, Minnesota, June 10-13, 2006.

Information is beginning to appear on the LWVUS web site. You may wish to check the web site from time to time as new information is added. For purposes of your budget planning for the 2006-2007 league year, the registration fee this year is \$285 and hotel rooms at the Hilton are approximately \$176 (tax included) for a double room. Consider driving to Minneapolis and carpooling with other Leaguers from Kansas. From the Kansas City area, Minneapolis is a little over 400 miles.

These are very informative meetings and a wonderful opportunity to get ideas from what is working well in other Leagues. A featured speaker will be Garrison Keillor—not to be missed!

League of Women Voters T-SC

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Celebrating 86 years!

Tuesday Topics, January

“TABOR: What’s Wrong with the Taxpayers Bill of Rights?”

by **April Holman**

Director of Fiscal Focus, Kansas Action for Children’s State Fiscal Analysis Initiative project



April Holman

April’s duties include preparing analyses of state tax and budget systems and specific policy proposals, then distributing this information through written reports, legislative testimony, public presentations and electronic communications.

TABOR, law in Colorado since 1992.

April showed a video made by concerned citizens of Colorado-voters, parents and politicians-in warning to other states whose legislatures are discussing versions of TABOR in their own states.

In Colorado, the purpose of the legislation was to control tax increases. The law made increases dependent upon the rate of inflation and upon population growth. Numbers were tied to the Consumer Price Index, monitoring rises in consumer prices over time. Within the formula lies the fault.

States do not buy the same commodities registered by the Consumer Price Index. Rather, states buy goods and services specific to running the state: highway and road repairs, educational resources, and health care support are major state government responsibilities - and all have suffered in Colorado because of TABOR.

Beyond the faulty formula, TABOR in Colorado is extremely rigid. There is little flexibility built into the law. As a result, local government and organizations must plan creatively to fill in gaps in state programs.

For example, local Parent/Teacher organizations find themselves planning bake sales to raise monies for their children’s educational needs. Higher education in Colorado has taken a huge hit, with little funding for infrastructure-building repair and maintenance.

Public safety and health funding has taken a hit in Colorado. At the time the video was made, there was a five-year wait for those wishing to qualify. Health care for children goes unfunded.

How does TABOR legislation impact in Kansas?

Some aspects of TABOR, as used in Colorado, have been fine-tuned. But the rate formula, still based on

the Consumer Price Index, has not changed.

To become law in Kansas, the bill would have to pass each house of the legislature by a two-thirds majority, then would face a popular vote.

House Concurrent Resolution 50-15 is currently in the House Appropriations Committee. Voices in the legislature feel TABOR is unlikely to pass in Kansas during the 2006 legislative session but, should it pass, the question would appear on the ballot this fall.

Holman urges vocal opposition to this bill.

If TABOR had become law in Kansas in 1993, and run like Colorado’s TABOR, state spending would be drastically curtailed. Overall, the Kansas budget would have had \$444 million less for K-12 education, \$123 million less for higher education, \$35 million less for health care, \$25 million less for prisons, and \$163 million lacking for “other” budget components.

Why TABOR is a BAD idea:

1. TABOR becomes permanent. It amends our constitution.
2. Money becomes the name of the game. All budget changes are voted on by taxpayers. Monies pours into advertising for elections.
3. Elected state legislators become powerless. They will avoid making tough decisions, leaving them for taxpayers to decide.

Unintended consequences:

- TABOR shifts the burden of financing public programs to the local level.
- TABOR increases user fees-licenses, building permits, tolls, etc.
- TABOR is ineffective. It defers maintenance, costing more for emergency repairs.
- TABOR results in the loss of Federal monies.


One alternative to TABOR is being discussed in Kansas, the Taxpayer Empowerment Act (TEA). This plan still requires a two-thirds approval by both houses of the legislature and requires a statewide election-but does not change the state’s constitution. The major supporter of TEA and other TABOR-like legislation is Americans for Prosperity.

While TABOR caps funding, the Kansas plan does not. The Kansas plan does have a

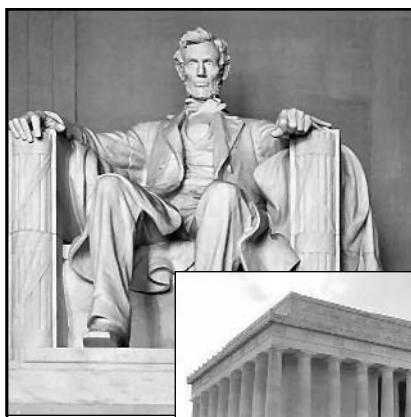
—continued on p. 4

rainy-day fund for emergency use, but has no way to refill the fund should it become depleted.

TABOR's biggest impact is on low-income citizens. Less populated areas have voters who may be less likely to see the benefits of social programs. Rural Kansas is fertile ground for TABOR proponents.

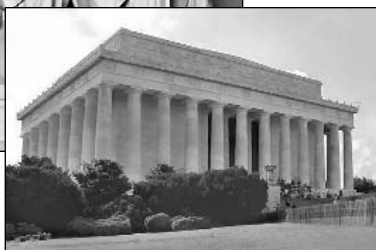
Holman endorses the “Coalition for a Prosperous Kansas” as the major voice of opposition to TABOR legislation in Kansas: <http://www.tabortruth.org/>. 

Dorothy Harder has agreed to chair the Budget Audit Committee. Other appointments to this committee and to a Board Minutes Review Committee are pending. This work is in preparation for our Annual Meeting, scheduled for Saturday, April 1st. Other recent committee appointments are listed below in “Board Briefs.”



In Memoriam: Presidents Day: February 20, 2006

- **George Washington**,
born February 22, 1732
- **Abraham Lincoln**,
born February 12, 1809



January 10, 2005 Board Briefs

All nine members of the Board were present for the January 10 meeting at O'Dooley's. The Consent Agenda—December minutes, January reports—was approved.

The Treasurer reported the official number of 111 members on which LWVUS will assess payment.

The President welcomed **Chelsey Smith** and appointed her to the Board, in charge of the publicity portfolio. The President announced she has appointed **Ruth Wilkin**, **Nancy Whiffen** and **Judy Moler** to the Nominating Committee; and will be appointing the Budget Committee.

The 1st packet on state study of Mental Health will arrive this week. March and April Tuesday Topics and VOICE meetings will focus on that study.

The Board adopted four recommendations from the Finance and Fundraising Committee:

Past Presidents serve as committee core; letters-be sent every other year; off years serve to evaluate and refine the process; strategy for staying in touch with donors be developed.

Annual meeting will be April 8 at the Library. Speaker and agenda items were discussed.

Members at the January 19 Roe v. Wade event will be sporting LWV buttons.

Mary Ann Breitbach and **Carol Jory** volunteered to be “conduits” for civil rights and related information.

Carol Yoho shared information about benefits, content, domain name, storage sites and costs for a LWVT-SC website. The board agreed informally and emphatically to have one.

by **Edith Bronson**,
LWVT-SC Secretary



Local Program Planning

Now is the time to review our local positions and plan our study for 2006-07. Below are LWVT-SC positions listed with year of the last study or update. Read details in the *2005 League Directory*. Is there one that you think should be studied or updated? Is there a new study issue that is timely, important to the community, can be resolved through governmental channels, and would give League visibility, influence and credibility? Mark your thoughts on what our League should do with each position.

Fill in your opinions and get it to the board—by mailing it to **President Jan Waide, 1618 SW 28th St, 66611**, or by giving it to her at **February Tuesday Topics**. Your opinion is important! The board will consider all membership input and decide whether and what issues to recommend to the Annual Meeting for adoption.

PROGRAM ITEM	STUDY?	UPDATE?	RETAIN?	DROP?
Child Care -1995				
Economic Development -2002				
City of Topeka Government -1995				
County government -1999				
Financing Local Government -1995				
Housing -1999				
Local Land Use, Planning, Zoning -1999				
Shawnee County Schools -1995				
Solid, Hazardous Waste Management -1999				
Public Health Care in Shawnee Co -1999				
Role of Shawnee Co. Health Agency Administration				
Health Agency Board				
Health Care Officer/Administrator				
Budget				
Financing				
Primary Care				
Health Education				
Home Health Services				
Environmental Health Services				
Dental Care				
Mental Health Services				
Volunteer Program				
Annexation in Topeka, Shawnee Co -2005				
Other topic(s) for study?				
List:				

Observer Reports

The January VOTER had City Council report dates switched. The report labeled "November 8, 2005" was actually Joe Sargent's "October 25, 2005" report, and vice versa. The VOTER editor regrets this error.

City Council

December 13, 2005, by Joe D. Sargent

When I arrived at the Council's Chambers at 7:00 p.m., there was standing room only. The reasons for this were the three ceremonies at which the Mayor was to make awards. The first was to six local military personnel who had been selected by their individual units for outstanding service. The second was to City workers who spent time away from work to help in the post-Katrina relief effort. Finally, a number of local citizens were recognized for their work on "The Clean Up Topeka Task Force Report." Council Member Preisner was absent from the meeting as was Acting City Manager Dobler.

An ordinance to establish a redevelopment district for the Washburn Lane College Hill area passed 8 to zero. This area qualifies as a blighted area. Essentially, this ordinance establishes the boundaries of the redevelopment area. Budget considerations are to follow.

Approval of a 2006 pay increase for WPC Union employees was delayed for one week by an 8 to zero vote. The Council voted to send back to the Economic and Development Committee a one-year conditional use permit for an outdoor storage facility of state and federal surplus items on land formerly occupied by the Topeka State Hospital.

As the Council neared the end of its agenda, the Chambers were empty except for me.

On December 20th, the Council by a split vote decided not to meet on December 20th and January 3rd.

Shawnee County Commission

December 15, 2005, by Jan Waide

This was a pretty routine meeting. The only interesting piece of information came from the consideration of year-end encumbrances/financial transactions. They separated out the one for the planning department because they have not been able to move forward on a long range plan for the county. No other comment was

made so an action plan for correcting this was not forthcoming.

January 5, 2005, by Jan Waide

The major issue today was the consideration of the redevelopment district for the Washburn Lane College Hill area. The project needs \$1.5 million of capital improvement money to fill a gap between TIF dollars and the developers' contribution.

To be a TIF district the area must be a "blighted area" in order to qualify for public dollars for the redevelopment of city areas. There are 9 criteria for determining a "blighted area." This area met 7 of those criteria when only five were needed to meet the classification. This designation provides incentives for these projects to occur in the city core so that services do not totally abandon the city center. This ultimately benefits low income citizens who have no transportation. The taxes going to this do not impact existing taxes going to schools, etc. in this area. But USD 501 must sign off on the agreement. After TIF bonds are paid off, tax values in the area should go up. The age of the bond may be 20 years and there will be no profit realized from the area but property values will be increasing during this time.

The developer is "Washburn Lane Renovation, LLC. (Limited Liability Corporation)." This is a single purpose entity. They are bonded and backed by the real estate and personal guarantees. Properties will be acquired at fair market value. No outrageous profits will be allowed.

One citizen spoke in support of the agreement by the county. Marice Kane made a plea that the county agree to help with this project but Vic Miller wanted many changes to the agreement before he would sign off and Ted Ensley agreed. Marice Kane pointed out that at the least this would delay the project (even if it does not stop it) which means the developers cannot meet their construction time frames which is very dependent on the weather.

The next hurdle is a hearing by the city on the plan. The city/county agreement will be read next week, according to Neil Dobler who attended this meeting.

January 12, 2005, by Jan Waide

Discussion of repairs to culverts and bridges damaged by the fall floods. FEMA will pay up to 75%, the

state of Kansas pays 10% and the county pays the remaining 15%.

Citizens owning property at 70th and Valencia had requested permission for a septic system on the property but the land is classified as agriculture land and is in a flood plain. They are requesting a waiver for a longer setback so that the septic system will not be in the flood plain. The agricultural classification requires a 30' setback. They would need to appeal to the Board

of Zoning Appeals (which costs \$130). That takes 60 days.

The Health Department staff in attendance were not comfortable with a variance. Public health code says there can be no septic system in a flood plain.

The decision on this request was delayed 15 days for further discussions. Commissioner Miller was convinced a solution could be found. 🍷

LWVUS NEWS *reprinted from The League E-Voice*

Sunshine Week 2006: Are We Safer in the Dark?

In addition to our “Openness in Government: Looking for the Sunshine” project, LWVEF and several other national organizations will sponsor an event entitled “Sunshine Week 2006: Are We Safer in the Dark?” on March 13, 2006. The event will begin with a 90-minute panel of distinguished speakers at the National Press Club in Washington, DC. This will be carried via satellite feed to participating libraries around the country. These libraries have been encouraged to work with local Leagues to host programs where the audience can ask questions of both the DC panel and local speakers who will address this issue at the community level. Partners in this event include the American Libraries Association, the Coalition of Journalists for Open Government and the National Freedom of Information Coalition. The ALA announcement containing details about the event can be found on-line:

<http://www.ala.org/ala/washoff/washnews/2005ab/118dec01.htm>

Since the deadline for registration is February 15, we do not yet know the participating libraries. We will share that information once it becomes available. Leagues should feel free to contact libraries in your area to see if they are interested in taking part. DVDs of the national panel will be available after the event. For more information, contact Danielle Duffy at <dduffy@lwv.org>.

Program Planning Materials Available Online

In preparation for Convention 2006, Leagues are encouraged to participate in Program Planning. Program Planning materials were sent out with the First Call to Convention in October 2005. You can find these materials for Program Planning at:

http://www.lwv.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Program_Planning

A LWVUS Program Planning discussion list is available for the first time to engage members in conversation about issues of national interest.

To subscribe:

- send an e-mail to subscribe-lwv-programplanning@lists.lwv.org and
- reply to the confirmation e-mail that will be sent within several minutes.
- The deadline for Leagues and ILOs to submit suggestions for program is March 1, 2006.

Congress Reconsiders Civil Liberties

Your voice was heard! Passage of the conference report to reauthorize the expiring sections of the USA PATRIOT Act was blocked in the Senate to allow more time to reconsider the law's impact on civil liberties. Instead, the House and Senate agreed to a one-month extension of the expiring portions of the Patriot Act to allow for more time to consider how civil liberties are balanced with homeland security.

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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED



CAROL YOHO, EDITOR
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5 blank cards
 + envelopes for \$5.
 Contact Betsy Rohleder

Mark your calendar:



**Topeka Chapter
 Annual Meeting**

9:30 a.m. Sat., Apr. 1, 2006

Watch for details in your March VOTER!

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:
 Sybil Wiegman, Treasurer
 2805 SW Tall Grass Dr.
 TOPEKA, KS 66614-6026
 785-478-1679

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