



VOTER

Volume 2008 Issue 2

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CALENDAR

MARCH 2008

4 Tuesday Topics - Topeka & Shawnee County Public Library Speaker-Carl Nuzman, Water Specialist

MENU: Sweet & Sour Chicken on Rice, Salad, Rolls & Butter, Brownies, and Beverage

11 LWVT/SC Board Meeting— Topeka and Shawnee County Public Library, Upstairs meeting room, all members welcome 11:30-1:00

13 LWVK Day at the Capitol – First Presbyterian Church, 817 Harrison Speakers-Paul Johnson, Legislative Update & Carol Williams, Kansas Ethics Commission (see announcement in VOTER)

27 New Member Orientation Nancy Shaughnessy's home, 1266 Collins, 5:00-7:00

APRIL 2008

1 Tuesday Topics - YWCA–Topeka & Shawnee County Public Library Speaker – Wind energy

MENU: Build Your Own Mexican Salad (Lettuce, Chili, Onions, Tomato, Cheese, Sour Cream, Chips), Dessert, drinks

5 ANNUAL MEETING-Top of the Tower, 534 S. Kansas Ave.9:00 AM Speaker-Thomas J. Romig, Dean of Washburn University School of Law.

Menu: Continental Breakfast \$5

8 LWVT/SC Board Meeting—Topeka and Shawnee County Public Library, Upstairs meeting room, all members welcome 11:30-1:00

15 VOTER deadline. Send Articles to Lois Cox;

(lois5510@hotmail.com)

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

Prez Sez



Georgia Sandlin
President LWVT/SC

The League of Women Voters of Topeka-Shawnee County "year" goes from April 1 to March 31. Our Annual Meeting is traditionally held in March or early April to con-

duct necessary business. We are a grass roots organization and our Annual Meeting reflects the participation of the members. At the annual meeting we review what we have done during the past year and determine the direction of the League for the coming year. The officers report to the membership activities and accomplishments of the past year. Using information from the past year the members plan for the future. We elect officers and adopt a budget. We may also choose a local program or study, adopt a position that has been studied, and amend the by-laws.

During the past year our local Mental Health Study was completed. We will vote on the adoption of that position for action. We may also vote to start another local study. We invite everyone to participate

in this function of the League. As a bonus Thomas J. Romig, Dean of the Washburn Law School will be our speaker before our business meeting. See the article in the VOTER for more information about Dean Romig. We feel privileged to have such a distinguished speaker.

On April 26 the Topeka-Shawnee County League has the privilege of hosting the LWVK Council meeting at Topeka High School Library. This serves as the state League's "Annual Meeting". The State League will elect officers and adopt a budget and take care of any other state-wide business that needs to be addressed. Committees from Topeka will be planning for this event.

Georgia

ANNUAL MEETING OF THE LWVTSC

9:00 AM

APRIL 5, 2008

MARK THE DATE ON YOUR CALENDAR

TOP OF THE TOWER

BANK OF AMERICA — 534 S. KANSAS AVE.

THOMAS J. ROMIG, DEAN OF WASHBURN UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW

WILL BE OUR SPEAKER BEFORE THE BUSINESS MEETING

CONTINENTAL BREAKFAST \$5

NOMINATING COMMITTEE REPORT

Secretary 2008-2010—Sybil Wiegman

Directors 2008-2010—Maryanna Quilty and Anita Epps

Nominating Committee Chair 2008-2009—Judy Moler

Nominating Committee Members 2008-2009—Patty Pressman and Susan Stover

Submitted by,

2007-2008 Nominating Committee; Edith Bronson, Chair; Judy Seitz and Susan Stover elected members; and Jane Holt and Pat Stinson, appointed members

LOCAL MENTAL HEALTH POSITIONS

*(to be presented for approval at the
annual meeting)*

The LWVTSC conducted a study of mental health services in Topeka and Shawnee County. The study committee was composed of Judy Moler, chair, Dottie and Bob Harder, Maryanna Quilty, Gwen Elliott, and Carol Jory.

STATEMENT OF POSITION:

The Local Mental Health Committee affirms the statement of positions forwarded by the State Mental Health Committee adopted by the state LWV on April 28, 2007.

As it relates to patient care and outcomes, it is felt that the system would benefit from a greater and continued oversight at the local and state level. This oversight could be by an independent group such as the LWV. If the oversight function is to be effective, they will need the ability to look at basic reports and records of the local mental health center(s). It seems that the system of care is broken. Providers do not appear to be working to establish a consumer driven, accountable system. It is difficult for patients to negotiate the system.

The Committee believes the mental health system should be consumer driven.

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF KANSAS - STATE COUNCIL MEETING

9:00 APRIL 26, 2008

HISTORIC TOPEKA HIGH SCHOOL

LIBRARY — 800 SW 10TH AVE.

The local Leagues of Kansas take turns hosting the conventions and council meeting for the League of Women Voters of Kansas. This year the Topeka League has the honor of hosting the Council Meeting. We have chosen the Topeka High School Library for our setting. Lunch will be served in the teacher's lunch room. League members from all the other Leagues in Kansas will be attending. The number of official delegates from each League is determined by the number of members in the League.

Registration—Sybil Weigman & Nancy Shaughnessy (name tags)

Greeters—Edith Bronson, Lois Scibetta & Marge Abrens

Hospitality—Jan Waide & Marge Heeney

Decorations—we need help

Design of Program—Carol Yoho

**IMMIGRATION STUDY
COMMITTEE FINAL VOICE
VOTE CONSENSUS**

Reported by Dr. Lois Scibetta

The Voice Meeting was held on January 17, 2008, at Sun's Restaurant from 5:30 to 8:30pm. The nine questions for which there was no consensus at the first Voice Meeting were considered and discussed.

Each member of the study committee presented a question, the background information, and the related discussion questions. The attendees were then asked to vote, by a show of hands, to determine if the question/issue was of "High Priority, Low Priority, or Disagree".

As noted, a total of nine questions were considered by the group. The first four questions related to what immigration laws should consider, the fifth question related to how the immigrants should be treated, and the final four questions dealt with enforcement issues.

The questions and responses follow:

Federal Immigration laws should take into consideration...

c. Environmental Impact/ Sustainability

Vote – Low Priority

e. History of Criminal Activity

Vote – High Priority

g. Immigrant Characteristics –Health and Age

Vote – No Consensus

k. Education and Training

Unauthorized immigrants currently in the US should be treated...

Some deported/some allowed to stay to earn legal adjustment status based on needs of US employers.

Vote – High priority

Federal Immigration laws dealing with unauthorized immigrants should be enforced by including:

iii. More effective tracking of persons with non-immigrant visas until they leave the country -

increased funding

Vote – High Priority

iv. Verification documents, green cards, work permits with secure biometric identifiers

Vote – No Consensus

v. Improved technology to facilitate employer verification of employment visa status

Vote – High Priority

viii. Significant fines proportionate to revenue for employers who fail to take steps to verify employment

Vote – No Consensus

Summary:

High priority issues identified by the voting members were, a history of criminal activity, some should be deported and some allowed to become citizens; more effective tracking of those with non-immigrant visas; and employer verification of employment status.

Those issues identified as Low Priority, were environmental impact, education and training. There was no consensus on the use of work permits, green cards and other biometric identifiers,

and finally, on fines for employers.

There was considerable discussion and debate over many of the issues raised. Immigration is a multi-faceted and complex issue. The study committee endeavored to focus on a balance between the needs of the US labor market and the effect on our infrastructure, and the needs of the immigrants who come to the US seeking a better life.

The final report was correlated, completed and forwarded to the LWVUS office in Washington DC by co chairs, Mary Kopp and Lois Scibetta on 1/21/08.

**NARRATIVE FOR THE
PROPOSED 2007-2008
BUDGET**

League of Women Voters of Topeka-Shawnee County, KS

INCOME

-Community contributions are received from businesses, professional groups and individuals who support the LWV's activities. Member contributions are money beyond dues submitted by any member.

Dues for annual membership are paid in one of four categories: household, which includes two persons living in the same household; regular, which refers to one individual member; student which refers to a full time student between the ages of 18 and 30 yrs.; sustaining, which includes individual members who support

(continued on page 7)

LWVTSC BUDGET 4/1/2007-3/31-2008

Category Description	Budgeted 2008-09	Actual 1/31/08	Budgeted 2007-08
<u>INCOME</u>			
Contributions			
Community	1000	1305	500
Members	<u>800</u>	<u>1031</u>	<u>300</u>
Total Contributions	1800	2336	800
Dues-Members			
Household (\$75)	675	525	675
NRHRebate (\$5)	35	0	35
Student	0	0	0
Regular (53)	4452	3392	4452
Sustaining (\$85)	<u>340</u>	<u>595</u>	<u>340</u>
Total Dues	5502	4512	5502
Finance and Development			
Auction	800	0	500
Notecards	500	170	500
Garage Sale	500	491	500
Pin Sales	0	0	35
Unspecified	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
Total Finance & Development	1800	661	1535
Interest	99	85	99
Meetings		310	
Annual Meeting	100	42	100
Governmental issues Mtg.	800	492	800
Tuesday Topics	100	0	100
Total Meetings	<u>1000</u>	<u>844</u>	<u>1000</u>
<u>TOTAL INCOME</u>	10,201	8,438	8,936

EXPENSES

Advocacy/action			
Local	30	0	30
National	10	5.69	10
State	<u>10</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>10</u>
Total Advocacy/Action	50	5.69	50
Assessments (PMP)			
LWVK (\$20)	2030	1602	2030
LWVUS (\$26.80)	<u>2726</u>	<u>2250.2</u>	<u>2760</u>
Total Assessments	4756	3852.2	4790
Board			
Budget & Nominations	10	0	10
Donations	0	0	0
Finance & Development			
Membership	100	44.03	100
President	20	367.82	20
Public Relations	50	0	55
Secretary	10	0	0
Supplies & Tools	10	0	10
Treasurer	25	22.15	2550
	<u>75</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>75</u>
TOTAL BOARD EXPENSE	300	434	300
Convention Expenses			
LWVKS Council	200	180	200
LWVUS Convention '08	<u>2000</u>	<u>568.39</u>	<u>800</u>
Total Convention/Council	2200	748.39	1000

(Budget continued on page 6)

(budget continued from page 5)

Education			
Local Programs	20	586.71	20
National Programs	20	0	20
State Programs	<u>20</u>	<u>36.54</u>	<u>20</u>
Total Education	80	623.25	80
Meetings			
Annual Meeting	100	151.42	100
Governmental Issues Meeting	800	507	800
Membership Event	100	254.45	100
Tuesday Topics	<u>100</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>100</u>
Total Meetings	1100	912.87	1100
Member Services			
Misc Mailings	0	0	0
Voter postage	575	303.98	575
Voter printing	690	482.42	690
Yearbook	<u>220</u>	<u>139.38</u>	<u>220</u>
Total Member Services	1485	925.78	1485
Publications			
Local Publications	0	0	0
US and KS Publications	<u>100</u>	0	<u>0</u>
Total Publications	100	0	0
Voter Service			
Candidate Forum	50	0	50
Unspecified Projects	0	0	0
Voter Service Handouts	100	0	100
Total Voter Service	<u>150</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>150</u>
TOTAL EXPENSES	10,210	7502.18	8936

**LEAGUE DAY AT THE CAPITOL
MARCH 13, 2008**

Registration will begin at 8:30 in Willard Hall, First Presbyterian Church, on the southwest corner of 8th and Harrison in Topeka. While we enjoy coffee and pastries, we will hear Paul Johnson, League consultant, discuss current legislation of interest to League and present talking points on some specific bills. Following Paul's presentation we will cross the street to the Capitol to visit legislators or sit in on committee meetings. We will return at 12 noon to eat lunch and to hear Carol Williams from the Kansas Ethics Commission. Deadline for registration (\$20) is Monday, March 10. Because parking is not available in the church parking lot, we have made arrangements for members to park in the Grace Episcopal Cathedral parking lot, 2 blocks west of the Presbyterian Church at 8th and Polk St. We will try to have a shuttle service going from one church to the other.

Send \$20 for registration by March 10 to:

(continued from page 4)
the LWV at a high level of dues payment. NRM refers to a person who joins the League through the LWVUS, which sends \$5 of the person's annual national dues to the local League.

Finance & Development refers to any activity or project that brings income for the general operations of the League. These include auctions/fundraisers, garage sale and/or sale of items.

Interest Income is derived from savings or CD accounts.

Meetings includes any income from planned or regular meetings of the LWVTSC. These are Annual Meeting, Governmental Issues Dinner, Membership Event and the monthly Tuesday Topics.

EXPENSES

Advocacy and/or Action covers the cost of forums in which the League is supporting one or more of its statements of position; communications with legislators, especially Congress and the Kansas Legislature; meetings with Topeka and Shawnee County elected officials and all printed materials used to explain the League's positions.

Assessments means the annual Per Member Payments (PMP) paid by the LWVTSC to both the national and state Leagues. The LWVUS PMP is \$26.85 per member. LWVK is budgeted for \$20 per member.

Board includes the administrative expenses of each Board member or off-board chair who carries out the work of the League.

Budget and Nominations com-

mittee members usually meet only one time and, thereafter, carry out their work by e-mail or phone. Costs include reproduction of papers specific to each committee.

Finance & Development refers to any planned money-making activity such as a community finance drive, a fundraising event or sale of items.

Membership covers the cost of communication with new and "lost" members and distribution of printed materials to them.

President expenses are varied of necessity: representing the LWV at meetings with registration and meals, travel to attend conferences, printed materials for distribution to the Board or committees, etc. The president is allowed to use her/his discretion in use of funds.

Public Relations involves announcements of meetings and special activities to the local print and electronic media and development of pamphlets or posters for such events.

Secretary includes notebook for minutes-taking and reproduction of minutes for Board, if needed, and LWVUS and LWVK Board designees.

Supplies and Tools involve production or purchase of board training materials, portfolio guidelines, and leaders' suggestions for study and advocacy.

Treasurer refers to postal card production for dues reminders, computer ink, production of treasurer's reports to board, and general postage.

Convention & Council represents figures for the LWVK convention and Kansas State Council. The LWVUS Convention is in Portland, Or. In 2008.

Education pertains to study materials produced for member or community information as separate publications or as part of an issue of the

VOTER (printing and postage). This includes national, state and local League information.

Meetings comprise Annual Meeting with payment of speaker and the annual meeting booklet containing business and board member reports; Governmental Issues Dinner wherein each member pays for own individual meal/s, and guest speakers' and invited guests' meals are paid by the League. The annual Membership Event may be offered free of charge to members and prospective members. Payments for the luncheon at Tuesday Topics are paid by the members and their guests. Excess payments are returned to the treasurer for the general fund. The general fund pays for luncheons for guest speakers by charging each member slightly in excess of the cost of the meal. (Meal charges also cover the room fee for Tuesday Topics.)

Member Services include the printing, folding and labeling of the VOTER as well as first-class postage. Publication of the annual "Yearbook," or portions thereof, are covered in this category. Contents include the annual calendar, board list and portfolios, LWV principles, LWVUS and LWVK positions in brief and all local League positions.

Publications refers to both local League, US and KS League publications as well as the LWVTSC Web site. Local publications are the LWVTSC membership flyer and the new member booklet entitled "Welcome to the LWVTSC." National and state publications would be purchased or obtained from their web sites and printed locally.

Voter Service in FY 2007-2008 will focus on voter education, registration of voters and developing interest in the elections.

BOARD BRIEFS

- The June Tuesday Topics will be held at O'Dooley's.
- The March Tuesday Topics speaker will be Carl Nuzman.
- Thomas Romig, Dean of Washburn University School of Law will be the speaker at the April 5 Annual Meeting. He is new to this position in the last year, was formerly a Major General and the Judge Advocate General of the United States Army and Deputy Chief Counsel for Operations for the Federal Aviation Administration.
- Our League will host the State League Council on April 26 at Topeka High School's library.
- We will have Voter Registration once a month at the Topeka/Shawnee County Public Library.
- The current water study will be finished by fall of this year in order to be ready for the 2009 legislative session. There will be no water study in March, but in both April and May.

The February 21 Voice Meeting will be at 5:30 at the Fairlawn Plaza Classic Bean. It is an important meeting at which our positions will be reviewed for proposed retention, drop, or change. It is also the time to discuss whether a local study will be proposed at the annual meeting.

PROCEEDINGS OF THE TOPEKA CITY COUNCIL FOR DECEMBER, 2007 AND JANUARY, 2008

All in all, December and January were months of great turmoil for our city government with the purchase of a second helicopter being the centerpiece in the ongoing dialogue between council members, the mayor, city administration, and Shawnee County District Attorney Hecht. In fact, the emotional atmosphere on January 29th in a closed door executive session became so intense that apparently Alcalá and Blackburn exchanged words. This led to city manager Bonaparte filing an ethics complaint against Alcalá.

The inclement weather on December 1st forced a rare cancellation of the council meeting and, of course, there were no scheduled

council meetings on Christmas and New Year Days.

Supposedly with only two council meetings in December, that month should have been a relatively quiet one, but not so. On December 4th Blackburn asked for a suspension of the rules so that he could introduce a communication authorizing the purchase of a second Robinson R-44 helicopter for the police. The suspension of rules passed five to three with Alcalá, Ortiz, and Harmon dissenting and by a similar vote the council approved the communication to proceed with the purchase of the helicopter. Council member

Haynes was absent that day.

On December 5th Mayor Buntin issued a warning that he would veto allocations to pay for the purchase of the second helicopter in the city budgets after 2008. The mayor asked District Attorney Hecht to investigate if the Kansas Open Meetings Act was violated prior to the council meeting on December 4th.

The council on December 19th defeated a resolution to postpone the purchase of the second helicopter until District Attorney Hecht completed his investigation. Six votes were needed to pass the resolution.

Proceedings continued on page 9

*Proceedings continued from
page 8*

Councilman Harmon on January 16th proposed banning any action by the council on any item being added to its agenda without at least 30 hours advanced notice. It did not receive a second and, thus, died. Various attempts to alter Harmon's original proposal also died.

At the same meeting the council passed by a five to four vote Blackburn's proposition to increase the Municipal Court fee from \$5 to \$10 until November 8, 2012 to raise revenues for the police equipment fund. This extra \$5 would raise and estimate \$250,000 over five years. Any money from the police equipment fund used to pay for the helicopter would require additional approval from the council. On January 16th Mayor Bunten issued a veto against the above proposition but on January 22nd the council obtained the six votes necessary to override Bunten's veto.

After conducting his investigation District Attorney Hecht concluded that there was no violation of the Kansas Open Meetings Act but the actions of involved council members had opened them up to the suspicion of possible collusion. He further ruled that the lease-purchase agreement approved on December 4th was not binding since it was not approved by a majority of the governing body and also was in agreement with Bunten

that the mayor had the power to veto the communication enacted on December 4th. Hecht stated that he would act to void the city's lease-purchase agreement by February 20th unless the city administration can convince him otherwise.

Other simmering concerns for the council and the city administration are the firemen's continued clash with the fire chief, Mayor Bunten's proposal to raise the city's sales tax by a half of a penny for improvements in the city's infrastructure and the hiring of an outside firm to conduct a nationwide search for a new city attorney because off Brenden long's recent departure from that position.

Submitted by Joe Sargent

NOTES ON COUNTY COMMISSION MEETINGS

by Georgia Sandlin

December 13, 2007

The trial balloon of using a single trash hauler to townships to save the roads was deflated today for lack of a second. Commissioner Miller had proposed having a "test" township choose one trash hauler to see if the wear and tear on the roads was reduced with fewer heavy vehicles pulling to the side. Apparently, the commissioners heard from the public – sometimes people would rather have their

Autonomy than their money.

December 17, 2007

After studying a recommended proposal for a GIS system using some county resources and some private resources the commissioners put their stamp of approval on the recommendation. They claim the plan provides more services for less money. Commissioner Buhler wanted the plan to include the communities outside of Topeka so the motion included this inclusion.

December 17, 2007 – Notes by Georgia Sandlin

December 17, 2007

It is good to see someone get a pat on the back for a job well done. Dick Kline received a pat from Commissioner Miller this morning. The contract before the commissioners was for medical and mental health services for those in custody of the Shawnee County Department of Corrections. Commissioner Miller congratulated Mr. Kline for a well written memo and the contract was approved 3-0.

There is a counter in the Shawnee County District Court Clerks' office that is too wide. The reach across the counter has caused injuries documented by an ergonomics expert. The commissioner agree that certainly this counter should be replaced (to the tune of \$30,000). Commissioner Miller would like the state' worker compensation program to contribute. We don't know if that is going to fly.

See commission on page 10

Commission from page 10

December 20, 2007

Some time was spent reviewing and questioning the information in an insurance policy (for 2008) that will cover many items as diverse as above ground storage tanks, vehicles, to employee dishonesty. The insurance coverage was approved.

The commission also approved encumbrances recommended by Marti Leisinger, county financial administrator. Department heads were asked to explain why each encumbrance was needed. Mrs. Leisinger explained that the criteria for said money must include expenses for 2007.

Commissioner Miller again expressed his lack of confidence in the Visioning process being proposed by the Topeka Community Foundation. He noted that such large sums of money need a necessary structure in place. Commissioner Ensley and Buhler reported that they believe staff and a facilitator will fill this function in time.

December 31, 2007

There were plenty of parking spaces at the courthouse on this Monday mourning so I suppose people were taking a holiday. Nevertheless the agenda for the Commission meeting was two pages long. There were 12 items on the consent agenda but it was approved with no questions.

The big ticket item was the awarding of the bid to Schmidlein for road improve-

ment on Wannamaker from 53rd to 47th. Schmidlein's low bid was \$1.45 million and the work is expected to be complete by October 24. The request for proposals for two bridges on Auburn Road over the Wakarusa River were also approved.

The contract with Valeo Behavioral Health Care, Inc. for mental health services was approved with no questions.

January 3, 2008

It was a sad day at the courthouse this morning when it was announced before the County Commission meeting that Butch Felker had died.

The administrative assistants of district judges asked the commissioners for funds to join the International Association of Administrative Professionals. Commissioner Miller had questions concerning the collective bargaining aspect of the organization. After being reassured that the group was a only professional organization the money was approved.

January 7, 2008

Anne Freeze of the Shawnee County Health Agency brought two contracts for approval. The first had a mouthful of a title: "2007-2008 Local Health Department Public Health Emergency Preparedness and Response-Pandemic Influenza Supplement" contract. This contract is with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The other contract was with Kansas Children Service League

enabling the two programs, "Bright Beginnings/Healthy Futures" and "Healthy Families Topeka" to work together to help at-risk families.

It appears the Topeka Tinman event will have competition from Lawrence as Lawrence is hosting an Ironman event the same weekend, June 15. John Knight of the parks and recreation department appeared before the commission. For permission to close areas of Lake Shawnee for special events in 2008.

Elizabeth Ensley will attend an International Association of Clerks, recorders and Election Officials meeting with the blessings of the commission. Approval for such meetings appears to be enhanced if one is able to share expenses with a roommate. Ms Ensley announced that she is throwing her hat in the ring for secretary of the group.

Clarification: At the November 5 meeting the commissioners voted to contribute to the Visioning process if they could be reimbursed by Go Topeka.. The reasoning being that the goal of visioning would be to bring jobs to Topeka and the extra sales tax earmarked to Go Topeka was to bring jobs to Topeka. I noted that perhaps the other towns in the county could also ask to be reimbursed from Go Topeka if they contributed to the visioning project. Commissioner Miller graciously informed this observer that the smaller towns in Shawnee County do not contribute the

See commission page 11

Commission from page 10

the extra sales tax to the Go Topeka organization so would not be justified in asking for reimbursement. That is good to know.

January 17, 2008

Once again an effort to combine functions of the city and county seems to have bit the dust. The city-county joint planning commission was disbanded in 2003 by the action of the city council and replaced with separate planning commissions. The county commissioners seem much happier with the change. City Manager Bonaparte appeared before the county commissioners to explore the possibility of establishing a joint planning commission again. Commissioners Ensley and Miller explained that they have had fewer complaints and now have some authority to respond to the complaints. The former joint planning commission was under the direction of the city. Commissioner Miller noted that the county wrote a check to the agency but had no say as to where the money went. Commissioners also intimated that the county's management of the money was more efficient. Commissioners agreed that they would consider a joint planning commission and department if it was under the direction of the county.

Commissioner Ensley reported that he attended a meeting in Lawrence regarding the open meetings act. He reported that, based on the information he received, the county

officials operated well within the law.

January 24, 2008

The commissioners were happy to accept the offer made by Credit Unions United and Educational Credit Unions to place a scoreboard at the Lake Shawnee Baseball Complex. The credit unions will have the message center on the scoreboard to advertise. Other companys, with the exception of financial institutions, could also advertise for a fee.

Innovia Films has another year of tax exemption from the county and has increased employment to 211 above the 190 promised. Mainline Printing Inc. also received a tax exemption for 2008 on a Seven Color KBA Rapidia 1005 Sheetfed Offset Press, whatever that is.

A culvert is less than 20 feet and more than 20 feet is a bridge. This information was mentioned when requests for a bids were presented. Commissioner Buhler rejected the suggestion by Commissioner Miller that one of the spans be named after her.

January 28, 2008

The Valencia Road issue popped up again on Monday morning. Cook, Flatt and Strobel Engineers reported on the condition of the road inspection completed in July. I wasn't clear to this observer why a July inspection was presented in January. The firm recommended they revisit the road in two months because most road damage occurs after freezing and thawing occurs.

The commissioners are looking for a 30 year solution because Kansas Sand has a 30-year conditional use permit and their trucks are reported to be causing the most damage to the road. Kevin Bittner, a Valencia Road resident, came to the meeting with a list of questions for Tom Vlach of the public works department. I was agreed that these questions would be addressed later. The commissioners agreed 3-0 to another review of the road in 60 days.

Expocentre maintenance to the tune of \$56,000 was approved with few questions. The bulk of the expense was \$39,000 to re-key the entire facility with the exception of the Manor Center.

January 31, 2008

There was a festive air in the meeting room, probably related to the K-State purple that Commissioner Ensley was wearing. The three black suits from Target were not smiling when Commissioner Miller asked that they go to Executive session to discuss the renewal of a tax exemption for Target Distribution Center and returned with a denial of the request. The county has denied this exemption for three years in a row. The county contends that Target agreed to maintaining at least 600 jobs for a 10 year tax exemption. Target says they need only pay a fine of \$4,000 for each job below 650. The Kansas Board of Tax Appeals agrees with Target but the county is appealing.

See commission page 12

Commission from page 11

The commissioners decided to solicit bids for lock box services instead of staying with Core First. The bid provided by Core First Bank for 2007 was never officially approved.

City manager Norton Bonaparte and Mark Biswell, Topeka's interim IT director, presented a draft of a plan to merge the city and county IT departments. The plan seemed to raise more questions than it answered. Many questions were related to the savings the city was claiming. After many pointed questions by Commissioner Miller and vague answers by Mr. Biswell a decision was deferred with discussion to be continued at the next commission meeting. Mr. Biswell agreed to bring more specific numbers related to savings to the next meeting.

February 4, 2008

Two issues dominated the County Commission meeting this Monday morning. County residents living east of Forbes Field reported to the commission that they were not in favor of the Sheriff's proposed shooting range across the road from their homes. The decision was deferred as there seems to be some question as to whether some of the property sits on a landfill containing contaminated water.

The second issue was phase two of the discussion/debate regarding the consolidation of city and county IT departments. The commissioners had requested more specific information on the savings the city claimed the county would have. Regardless of the "new" information there seemed to be no agreement on the numbers. The commissioners stated they are not inclined to merge the two departments under the city's jurisdiction when it appears to them that the county plan is more efficient and cost effective. Commissioner Miller said he will again offer to the city an incentive of \$1 million to merge the two IT departments under county control.

February 7, 2008

This Shawnee County Commission meeting was short and dealt with routine business. The commissioners approved the purchase of equipment for parks and recreation, weed department, refuse department and sheriff's office. KLM Marketing Solutions' contract was approved for use of Lake Shawnee for the 2008 and 2009 Topeka Tinman Triathlon.

February 14, 2008

The first order of business was recognition of Jerold Binkley as a distinguished volunteer for work on the Garden at Lake Shawnee. Mr. Binkley also announced that 2008 would be the last year for the tulip display that has been open to the public at his home.

During one of the county's snow moving operations the heavy equipment damaged a county employee's vehicle in the parking lot. The commissioners approved the claim for damage to the vehicle.

After some ruminations it was decided that Commissioners Miller and Buhler would be appointed to the Corridor Advisory Committee relating to the US Highway 24. With the development of property along highway 24 across Shawnee County to Huxman Rd. KDOT a comprehensive study will be conducted.

The commissioners spent some time determining the needs, costs, and maintenance of property needed for the county fair. They were discussing goat, swine, and sheep pens as well as rabbit and poultry cages. The plan is to find an organization to be responsible for said items. Funding for new items would come from the Expo Capital Fund.

In executive session the commissioners decided to settle a medical claim brought by KU Med Center for a man shot by a Topeka police officer. The money will come from a special liability fund.

LEGISLATIVE E-REPORT LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF KANSAS

Paul Johnson , Reporter

This week in the legislature, there is a significant focus on energy, and specifically passage of legislation enabling construction of the Holcomb coal-fired plants and stripping the Secretary of the Kansas Department of Health and Environment from implementing policy on environmental issues. The Kansas League does not have a position on coal-fired plants. LWVUS does have a strong position on air quality, and has long been a supporter of the Clean Air Act (which was enacted by Congress in 1990) and has fought attempts to weaken the air quality standards. This gives us a basis for arguing against the coal fired plants, **as presently configured**, on the basis of the reported increase in carbon emissions. Talk to your legislators this weekend, and focus your comments and your questions on maintaining air quality and questioning the impact on clean air if/when these plants should be built, as presently described in the bills referenced below. Ask them to support a clean, healthy Kansas by voting against these two bills.

ENERGY POLICY BATTLES

The battle over energy policy has begun in the Kansas Legislature or should I say energy war? An identical House Bill (**HB 2711**) and Senate Bill (**SB 515**) were introduced on the respective floors of the Kansas Legislature. The rush is on to have committee hearings this week and have the full floor debates the week of February 11. These bills will mandate approval of the two new coal plants at Holcomb and open up Kansas to further coal expansion. This is a generational decision that our children and grandchildren will live with for decades.

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Legislature from page 12

Taking a page from the Dick Cheney playbook of writing secret energy policy, the chairmen of the Kansas Senate Utilities committee and the House Utilities committee wrote the bill in private with just the industry in attendance. Unfortunately the ranking Democrats – Rep. Annie Kuether and Sen. Janis Lee – played along endorsing this legislation and the denial of open government. There are now dueling websites. The Alliance for Sound Energy is promoting these bills and can be found at www.soundenergypolicy.net. The Great Plains Alliance for Clean Energy is opposing the legislation and can be found at www.gpace.org.

The Governor had several meetings with the owners of Holcomb - Sunflower electric cooperative that consists of six rural electric cooperatives. Initially, Sunflower had applied for just one smaller coal unit to add to their existing coal plant at Holcomb. Sunflower withdrew that application and applied for a permit to build three large coal units. In the process of applying, the request was reduced from three units to just two, at least for now. The majority of the electricity generated from the coal plants will not be used in Kansas but sent to Colorado. The Governor offered a compromise to allow the first smaller coal plant if Sunflower invested in more wind power and energy efficiency. Sunflower turned the Governor down and the battle ensued. The Governor signed Kansas on to climate change policies of the Western Governor's and the Midwest Governor's Associations so Kansas will move ahead on studying and mitigating greenhouse gases.

The Alliance for Sound Energy has suited up the former Chairman of the Kansas Corporation Commission – Brian Moline. It is the appropriate role for Brian since he offered no leadership at

the KCC for energy conservation or renewable energy sources. Kansas has been last of all 50 states in having energy conservation programs and even though Kansas has the third best wind resources in the nation, Kansas is only 11th on the list of states with wind energy. The best article on climate change and the reaction by key Kansas Legislative leadership was written in December by Duane Schrag for the Salina Journal. This can viewed on www.gpace.org under the title 'Legislators ignore research about climate'.

The shadow of Holcomb will hang over this legislative session in many ways. The chair of the House Utilities committee, Rep. Carl Holmes, told the House Republican caucus that no legislation will move out of his committee until the Holcomb matter is resolved. The Governor's budget will be held hostage and reduced if the Holcomb matter is not settled satisfactorily to the wishes of the Republican leadership.

SOCIAL SERVICE ENHANCEMENTS

In tight fiscal times, social services compete with other key priorities such as education and public safety. The Governor and the Kansas Legislature have developed a process to automatically protect social service caseload changes, so for now this funding is protected. Beyond that funding, the Governor's budget would replace \$9 million in lost federal funding to assure adequate staffing to complete investigations of child abuse and neglect reports. The adoption support program would increase by 423 children to a yearly total of 6,899 children. The child care caseload would increase by 768 children to a total of 22,368. Funds have been added to make certain there are no waiting lists for home services for the Physically Disabled or Traumatic Brain Injury. (There is a large waiting list for the Developmentally Disabled services.) A new web-based eligibility and enrollment system for food stamps, Medicaid and

child care has been proposed in the Governor's budget. One alarming element in the Governor's social services (SRS) budget recommendations is a \$7 million cut in funding for mental health care. State Board members are following this issue closely and will keep us informed about any need to contact legislators as the budget moves through the various committees.

The Governor's budget is built on \$81 million from the new casino's and slot machines. The Kansas Supreme Court has a test case on the legality of the new casino/slot machine law. If that funding source is rejected by the Legislature, these social service enhancements may well disappear.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING PLANS

(LWVK doesn't have a specific position on housing for low-income, special needs and other vulnerable persons. However, access to affordable housing is found in our Equality of Opportunity, Mental Health Care and Meeting Basic Human Needs positions)

In light of the severe flooding in southeast Kansas and the tornado at Greensburg, the loss of housing is a tremendous challenge for the affected communities to rebuild their local economies. Over 2,000 homes were lost and even today most Kansans displaced remain in temporary housing options. Kansas has directed very few state dollars to housing in the past. Existing housing programs for rural areas are found in the Kansas Housing Resources Corporation and these programs are primarily funded with federal dollars or tax credits.

Without state resources to help subsidize the low-income housing tax credit rental projects or provide subsidies for first time homebuyers, the housing is unaffordable for many workers. SB 417 would direct \$4 million of state revenues targeted for disaster areas.. In the Governor's budget, \$3 million would be dedicated to the State Housing Trust Fund to expand existing programs.

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS
LOIS COX, VOTER EDITOR
910 SE 43RD STREET
TOPEKA, KANSAS 66609-1620**

I want to add my voice to yours by joining the League of Women Voters. I enclose:

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