



VOTER

April 19 2010

CALENDAR

President:

Gwen Elliott
3469 SE Crestwater Dr.
(66605)
(785-267-4037)

Membership:

Nancy Shaughnessy
1266 SW Collins (66606)
785-232-5931

VOTER Editor:

Lois Cox
910 SE 43rd Street (66609)
785-267-5458

Inside this issue

Annual meeting	9
City Council	4
County Commission	5
Educational Quotes	6
Georgia Sandlin	2
Greater Judicial Diversity	7
May Tuesday Topics	3
June Tuesday Topice	3
Prez Sez	2
Thomas Jefferson	3
Where did the money go	8

May 2010

**4 Tuesday Topics -
Topeka and Shawnee
County Public Library,
11:30**

Speaker-Mark Dupree,
Johnson County Assistant
Public Defender, is a mem-
ber of the Kansas Bar Asso-
ciation's Diversity Commit-
tee.

MENU: Vegetable soup,
assorted deli meats, condiments,
homemade buns, cookies, iced tea.
Price is \$8.25.

**11 LWVT/SC Board Meet-
ing - Topeka and
Shawnee County Public
Library,** upstairs meeting
room, all members welcome,
11:30-1:00

June 2010

**1 Tuesday Topics -YWCA
225 SW 12th St., 11:30**

Speaker-Jim Langford,
Budget and Finance Direc-
tor for the City of Topeka

MENU: Meat lasagna, garden
salad, dinner roll, chef's choice of
vegetable and dessert, iced tea.
Price is \$10.

**8 LWVT/SC Board Meet-
ing - Topeka and
Shawnee County Public
Library,** upstairs meeting
room, all members wel-
come, 11:30-1:00

**11 VOTER DEADLINE
5pm—send articles to
lois5510@hotmail.com or
Lois Cox 910 SE 43rd
Street, 66609**

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



Gwen Elliott President LWVT/SC

Thanks to everyone who helped with the Annual Meeting and especially to Georgia Sandlin, who prepared the Annual Meeting Booklets, sent a special mailing to our members, and ordered the pins for the 50-year members. This year, we are honoring Nickie Stein, Ruth Wilkin, and Dottie Harder, who join Winnie Crapson and Fannie Mandelbaum as 50-year members of our League. Congratulations to them!

At Annual Meeting, our League was also pleased to accept a lovely bouquet of yellow roses from Linda Hayse and her committee from Zonta Club of Topeka, who honored our League with its International Women's Day award for service to women, a cause that Zonta also promotes.

We were very sorry to learn that Georgia fell from steps leading to the attic above her garage on April 2nd, and broke her pelvis in four places. The good news is that she is recovering steadily. We wish her well and hope that she will soon be back with us, as active as ever.

We have at least five members planning to attend State Council on May 1st in Manhattan. At Council, our League is presenting a proposal, written by Liz Post, for a State Study on Tax Exemptions. In keeping with the Quest for a More Diverse Judiciary, the Council program includes a panel discussion by three distinguished Kansas jurists. Our own League will continue to explore the diverse ju-

diciary topic with an enthusiastic professional speaker at the May Tuesday Topics. Please plan to attend and to bring friends.

Because we cannot reserve the library auditorium in the summer months, we are planning to hold Tuesday Topics in June and July at the YWCA. Please watch for more information.

Following tradition, we are planning a garage sale for June 5th at my house, 3469 SE Crestwater Drive. I am already receiving nice donated items, and more are welcome. The sale presents a great opportunity to clean closets and to empty drawers.

As always, please continue to check our website, LWVTSC, which Carol Yoho maintains so well, for information and calendar updates. Hope you are enjoying the beautiful blooms of spring!

Note Regarding Georgia: Our recent past president, Georgia Sandlin, is recovering from a broken pelvis suffered in a fall on April 2nd. You may send notes and cards to her at her home address listed in our 2010 Annual Membership Directory.

Tuesday Topics: May 4

Mark Dupree, Johnson County Assistant Public Defender, is a member of the Kansas Bar Association's Diversity Committee. He has made public speaking an art and focus, especially relating his life story of growing up in the KCKS inner city and encouraging himself and others in education and beyond. He has a special investment in the problems related to diversity in the judiciary. Come for lunch at 11:30AM or just for the presentation and discussion from 12:00PM to 1:00PM. Expect to see the issue from the inside out!

Tuesday Topics: June 1

Jim Langford, Budget and Finance Director for the City of Topeka, will address our membership as we begin the study of the financial structure of Topeka and Shawnee County governments. Jim began his career as a budget analyst for the State of Kansas and had experience with development of the Governor's budget. In his position with the City of Topeka he has oversight responsibility for cash management, central accounting, and development of the City's operating and capital budgets. Jim holds a masters degree in Public Administration from Kansas State University. He'll get our feet on solid city-within-the county financial ground.

Thomas Jefferson

"It has been said the greatest brainpower in one place occurred when Jefferson dined alone." *John Kennedy*

Jefferson Quotes:

1. **"When we get piled upon one another in large cities, as in Europe , we shall become as corrupt as Europe."**
2. **"I believe that banking institutions are more dangerous to our liberties than standing armies. If the American people ever allow private banks to control the issue of their currency, first by inflation then be deflation, the banks and corporations that will grow up around the banks will deprive the people of all property until their children wake-up homeless on the continent their fathers conquered."**
3. **"The tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots and tyrants."**
4. **"I predict future happiness for Americans if they can prevent the government from wasting the labors of the people under the pretense of taking care of them."**

**REFLECTIONS ON THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE TOPEKA CITY
COUNCIL FROM OCTOBER 2009 TO DECEMBER 4, 2009** BY
JOE SARGENT

On April 7th councilwoman Swank became deputy mayor replacing councilman Harmon, who had held that position for the past year. He had to assume mayoral duties soon after his election because of Mayor Bunten's lengthy illness. At the same meeting council members, Ortiz and Preisner, were elected to the Joint Economic Development Organization, a city-county board that promotes economic development and improvements in infrastructure through a county-wide half-cent sales tax.

In late March city manager Boneparte revealed that the city needed to reduce its operating expenses for this calendar year by \$3.5 million because of a budget shortfall. He announced that as of now there was an immediate hold in the 2010 budget on vehicular replacement and repairs to facilities and equipment except for needed emergency repairs. Boneparte plans to present a strat-

egy in May to cut \$3.5 million out of the \$82.6 million in the general fund. Also he has formed a 63 member panel called the City Operations and Service Team, charged with the task of making the city government more efficient. In mid-February Boneparte announced that 36.25 vacant positions were eliminated and six employees were terminated, four of which were from the zoo management staff. .

The housing of the two elephants at the zoo became an issue in early February. The council on February 23rd rejected a resolution to move the elephants and many of its members felt the decision regarding the elephants should be left to when a full-time zoo director is hired. In early March the Topeka zoo avoided losing its accreditation from the Association of Zoos and Aquariums; it required the Topeka zoo to file a progress report in six months and will do a follow-up inspection in March, 2011 to decide

whether the zoo will retain its accreditation.

This winter has produced more potholes than in previous years. One city official called the job of filling the potholes an overwhelming task. To help with this task the city purchased two new pothole patching trucks and even contracted with a private company for this purpose.

There has been great excitement generated by the possibility that Google might select Topeka as its site to install an experimental high speed Internet network. In fact, the council gave its support to this project. Subsequently, Topeka obtained notoriety as Google, Kansas from around the world and as a result Mayor Bunten had to field a great number of inquiries from interested individuals.

The final chapter in the helicopter saga has ended. The 1994 Schweizer 300C helicopter was sold on March 31st for \$102,500 to a private individual from Hayes.

NOTES ON COUNTY COMMISSION MEETINGS

BY GEORGIA SANDLIN

FEBRUARY 15, 2010

We had some happy talk to start off the meeting this Monday morning. Representatives of TARC came to express their gratitude for the work, especially in the nasty weather, the county workers did on the Winter Wonderland fund raiser. County electricians and other workers were present to say "you're welcome".

An up grade of the Expocentre's scoreboard, signs and Marquee is expensive. The commissioners didn't approve the request when it was first brought before them. They wanted more information, particularly on the funding. H.R. Cook, manager of the Expocentre explained that the money would be paid back to the county in five to seven years with money from facility fees and guest tax money. The commissioners approved the request 3-0.

Other requests and contracts were approved with few questions.

FEBRUARY 18, 2010

Residents along NW Valencia Road have protested to the commissioners, creating some very intense commission meetings in the past, about the truck traffic from Kansas Sand and Concrete.

The conditional use permit came up for review today, the company was found in compliance and no one from the public commented. Sometimes lack of drama is good.

John Kabus of the weed department brought two requests and one contract to the commissioners. The commissioners gave the go-ahead to solicit bids for chemicals and to enter a contract to control noxious weeds. Mr. Kabus was asked to explain the request to waive the bidding process for a new vehicle. Even though he said the county would probably save money the commissioners were not convinced and instructed him to follow the bidding process.

The question of what names would be sent to the collection agency for delinquent taxes may have made its final appearance before the commissioners. Those people with a vehicle license will not be referred but will be denied a new license if the taxes are not paid. Commissioner Miller stated that better the whole amount owed to the county come to the county rather than give 25% of it to the collection agency. Marsha Ralston, office manager of the motor vehicle division of the treasurer's office, was reporting to the commission today and appeared to agree.

FEBRUARY 22, 2010

Two items on the

agenda received most of the attention of the commissioners today. Steve Bolton, refuse and recycling returned with the results of the survey regarding curbside recycling. If the responses are representative of the population, residents of Shawnee County are in favor of curbside recycling and would be willing to pay the fee. The commissioners did not appear convinced, maybe because the sample was relatively small. They wanted more information. No action was taken.

Under commission business was the consideration to issue "Request for Proposals" for audit services for Shawnee County and the Shawnee County Health Agency. Anne Freeze, of the health agency, reported that any audit company cannot do a health agency audit. This observer is confused on this issue. Perhaps the commissioners are also, because it was deferred until the counselor's office could review the proposal.

MARCH 11, 2010

Commissioner Buhler was absent at the commission meeting this morning due to high school basketball playoffs. Commissioner

(County Commission continued on page 6)

(County Commission continued from page 6)

Miller entertained those assembled to a play-by-play of the last few minutes of the Rossville High School game the previous evening when Matt Buhler scored the winning point.

Today's business included a variety of requests and contracts for approval. As usual, if the request involved no expense for Shawnee County it was approved. If there was a request to waive the bidding process or multiple bids were not received questions were asked. Two items were deferred, office furniture for the health agency and metal culvert materials for public works, to wait for more information

Some time was spent with Mr. Wheeler of Berlin-Wheeler Collection Agency because the commissioners did not understand the billing statements the agency submitted to Shawnee County. This item was deferred until the worker bees that dealt with the numbers could be present.

Eric Theel, technology, reported that a large majority of the people responding to an on-line survey (994) approved of using county money to attract Google.

It has been apparent, by this observer, at Shawnee County Commission meetings that not all is well with Williamsport Township because the appointment of trustees has not been smooth. This morning Commissioner Miller proposed that Williamsport Township be dissolved and divided between Monmouth and Auburn Townships. This morning's proposal is the first step in the process. I predict drama.

March 15, 2010

The county commission meeting room was full this Monday morning. The office furniture for the health agency and metal culvert material for public works showed up first on the agenda and were quickly approved 3-0. However, the

billing statements from Berlin-Wheeler were deferred once more until Tammy from the treasurer's office returns from vacation. The commissioners raised the limit needed, for approval by county commissioners, for repairs and maintenance on county buildings from \$1,000 to \$1,500.

No surprise, the usual empty chairs were occupied by residents of Williamsport Township. The comments from residents to Commissioner Miller ranged from "You sure messed things up", to "It was good that it got people's attention". The township treasurer had concerns she wouldn't be able to hire anyone to service the roads if there was no guarantee the job would be there. We all got a civics lesson when commissioners explained that the county commission has no authority to supervise township boards. County commissions are required by law, only, to fill vacancies on township boards.

PROVOKING EDUCATION QUOTES

1. **Teachers open the door, but you must enter by yourself.** *Chinese Proverb*
2. **I cannot teach anybody anything, I can only make them think.** *Socrates*
3. **Education is not the filling of a bucket, but the lighting of a fire.** *W.B Yeats*
4. **A teacher is one who makes himself progressively unnecessary.** *Thomas Carruthers*
5. **The job of an educator is to teach students to see vitality in themselves.** *Joseph Campbell*
6. **Genus without education is like silver in the mine.** *Benjamin Franklin*
7. **I have never in my life learned anything from any man who agreed with me.** *Dudley Field Malone*
8. **The highest result of education is tolerance.** *Helen Keller*

March Tuesday Topic, Is Gender Diversity Important

By Grace L. Wilson

Jeffrey Johnson, associate professor of law from the Washburn University Law School spoke on Judicial Diversity at the March Tuesday Topics. He talked about the importance of getting good statistics, because without them how will we figure out what to do.

Johnson said that we need to take a comprehensive look at how we select judges in Kansas, the how and why, and ask the questions: "Is diversity an important thing? Do we want to have judges that mirror the community they live in? Is gender diversity important?"

Johnson spoke mostly about gender diversity and when asked about minorities in the judiciary, he said that a lot had been written about racial diversity, but not very much about gender. He has written articles about gender diversity.

The percentage of women in the population of Kansas is 50.3 percent. Only 12 percent of district court judges are women. Women law students are 40 to 50 percent of graduating law school classes now. Nationally about 32.6 percent of practicing attorneys are women.

Should we measure the desired diversity by the pool of people who are eligible or use an affirmative action or gender quota? Johnson said that all we want is for people to have a fair shake, that their judge has been fairly chosen. We may not want a "quota" judge on our case.

To be selected as a district judge, an attorney has to have been practicing for five years. Even that does not guarantee being selected. Usually it is more like 10 years, because they are looking for experience. This makes the pool of women eligible for the selection process much smaller. Because incumbents usually win or are retained, judgeships do not come open very often.

The number of women attorneys that live in a particular district may be small. The one county-one judge rule for magistrate judges in Kansas means that a district with a smaller number of women attorneys has to have one judge, whereas a district that includes Shawnee County would have a larger number of women attorneys to select from if they could have more judges.

In Kansas we have 14 districts with judicial elections and 17 with a merit system where three judges are selected by the judicial nominating commission and the governor selects one. The majority of females come from districts using the merit system. Although most judges are retained in the merit system, fewer women are retained than men.

The implicit bias, Johnson said, is not that we think of women as bad judges, but that we do not think of women as judges. While Kansans tend to be traditionalist and want change to happen slowly, Johnson said that Kansans tend to be progressive if given a good reason.

We need to keep the merit system, which promotes independence, Johnson said, and get it out in front of the public more often. We are probably stuck with the dual system, so we need to find viable candidates and encourage them to run for election and also run for the judicial nominating commission. Each judicial division has a judicial nominating commission of three lawyers and three non-lawyers. They interview applicants and submit one to three names to the governor who must select one.

The influence of money in elections is a problem. Transparency in the merit system could be a problem if some otherwise qualified applicants do not want their names heavily publicized.

Attorney admission systems (when they pass the bar examination) do not keep track of diversity, so we would have to use the entire roster of attorneys in Kansas to get those statistics. Perhaps the League Diversity Project could be involved with that.

March Tuesday Topic, 'Where has all the money gone?'

At Annual Meeting on April 6, Joan Wagon, Kansas Secretary of Revenue, said that one good month of revenue collections will not get the state of Kansas out of the woods. February was just "awful," and because we were down \$100 million, we are still \$92 million in the hole for the current fiscal year. The governor took care of some needs with the stimulus money.

"But we are robbing Peter to pay Paul," Wagon said, "and Paul is about broke." The state has a \$700 million certificate due on June 30, is behind again with the schools, and is paying bills late. Tax refunds might be late. Cuts in next year's budget for Education are now around 65 percent and for Human Services 23 percent. Public safety including prisons is in jeopardy, even with the use of highway funds. Add the effect of the recession, when people are not working and there is no withholding coming in from their salaries.

"Revenues are decreasing, not going up," Wagon said. In 2003, the state started spending some of the balance it had built up in the previous years. It is gone.

Corporate taxes are such a small amount compared to individual taxes. The state is very dependent on the Individual Income Tax which brings in 44.8 percent of revenue. The Corporate Income Tax brings in 4.2 percent. Sales and Use Tax brings in 38.9 percent.

"It's very popular to cut taxes," Wagon said. In 2006, the legislature wanted to eliminate the Estate Tax, which could bring in \$47 million if we still had it. It benefits about 900 wealthy families, most of whose heirs live out-of-state. The Franchise Tax, which we have had since Kansas became a state, has been capped at \$20,000 when it could be more.

Sales Tax for online shopping, which everyone should be reporting on a form with their taxes, is pretty much uncollectable. People shopping online owe it, but no one pays it, and it could bring in \$264 million. The tax base is eroding with sales tax exemptions and tax credits. The state does not do any studies to see if a tax credit for economic development worked. Did it produce growth?

"I'm not saying that some of these tax exemptions are not justified," Wagon said. She cited the Earned Income Tax Credit as something that helped low income people. But the sales tax exemptions are very inequitable. Agricultural machinery gets a tax exemption, but not a plumber's equipment. One non-profit might have an exemption, but another similar one does not

All these exemptions and credits mean that the state has to have a higher tax rate to raise the same amount of revenue, which makes us less competitive with other states. Tax exemption legislation did not even get out of committee this legislative session.

Wagon's tax policy recommendations include: 1. Enacting a moratorium for 3 years on all credit and tax exemptions. 2. Enacting a policy on Sales and Property Tax exemptions. 3. Instituting a Sunset Review on all Sales and Property tax exemptions. And 4. (Budgets are transparent and reviewed annually; exemptions are not.)

On April 15, the state will have a 2010 revenue estimate and a revised 2011 estimate. Wagon said it would be a very long legislative wrap up session with no plan on the table. People say "Don't cut my schools, don't remove my church's tax exemption, but don't raise my taxes." Every trial balloon is being popped, because people are just voting "No," without any alternative plan.

Note: Ric Anderson's column in the *Topeka Capital-Journal* on April 13 said that the amount of revenue generated by exempted machinery and business equipment would be \$231 million, and 40 non-profits exempted would generate only \$2.2 million. Marj Heeney's letter to the editor on Feb. 6 said "we are giving away twice as much in state sales tax as we are collecting." More information is available at www.ksrevenue.org.

By Grace L. Wilson

SCENES FROM THE ANNUAL MEETING



Above: Clockwise from upper left, **Joan Wagnon**, guest speaker; right side, three photos of presentation of roses to the LWV-TSC Board of Directors from **Zonta** ([Zonta International](#) is a global organization of executives and professionals working together to advance the status of women worldwide through service and advocacy); lower left, **Dotty Harder** and **Ruth Wilkin** receive pins and recognition for 50 years each as LWV members; left center, **Joan Wagnon** addresses attendees.

**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

_____ \$53 for a 1 year Individual Membership.

_____ \$75 for a 1 year Household Membership.

_____ \$85 for a 1 year Sustaining Membership.

_____ \$25 for a 1 year Student (age 18) Membership.

_____ I am unable to join the League at this time, but enclosed is a tax-deductible
Contribution in the amount of \$_____

Name _____

Address _____

Please make check payable to league of Women Voters Topeka Shawnee County and

Send to Sybil Wiegman, Treasurer, 2805 SW Tall Grass DR., Topeka, KS 66614-6206.

(785) 478-1679