

VOTER

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF TOPEKA & SHAWNEE COUNTY



January

- 3 **Tuesday Topics**, at Topeka and Shawnee County Public Library, 1515 SW 10th Av., 11:30AM-1PM. Speaker: Karen McCulloch (see Page 14)
January Menu: Cream of potato soup, w/deli meats, condiments, homemade buns, cookie and iced tea.
- 10 **LWV-TSC Board Meeting**, at Topeka and Shawnee County Public Library, 1515 SW 10th Av., 11:30AM-1PM.
Check the schedule displayed in the lobby for assigned room. Food can be brought to the meeting from Millennium Cafe. All members are welcome.
- The Voice Meeting** on privatization is 1 PM to 3 PM at Topeka Shawnee County Public Library.
- 19 **VOICE Meeting**: Program Planning is at O' Dooley's restaurant, 1930 Westport Dr. Come at 5 PM to order off the menu. Meeting starts at 5:30 PM.
- 31 **Political Issues Forum** —Redistricting
6:30 p.m., Tuesday, January 31, at the Topeka and Shawnee County Public Library. Panelists will include:
Senator Steve Morris, Senate president
Rep. Paul Davis, House minority leader
Rep. Brennda Landwehr, chair of the House Health and Human Services committee
Martin Hawver, Statehouse reporter and an expert on re-districting from KU.
The moderator is Charles Jones from Kansas University, Co-sponsored by the University of Kansas College of Liberal Arts and the League of Women Voters of Kansas and the League of Women Voters of Topeka/Shawnee County.

February

- 7 **Tuesday Topics**, at Topeka and Shawnee County Public Library, 1515 SW 10th Av., 11:30AM-1PM. National Privatization Study speakers to be announced.
February Menu: Chicken a la king on pastry shell with fruit cup, cake and iced tea.
- 14 **LWV-TSC Board Meeting**, at Topeka and Shawnee County Public Library, 1515 SW 10th Av., 11:30AM-1PM. Check the schedule displayed in the lobby for assigned room. Food can be brought to the meeting from Millennium Cafe. All members are welcome.
- 15 **League Day at the Capitol** @ KS Bar Association Bldg., Topeka
TOPICS: To be determined Meeting time to be determined.
- 16 VOICE Meeting: "LWVUS Study on Privatization" Meeting time and place to be determined.
- 17 VOTER Deadline

*Tuesday Topics are held in room JCM 101B, across from the Millennium Cafe at the Topeka-Shawnee County Public Library, unless otherwise indicated..
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](mailto:Betsy.Rohleder).*

LWVTSC Officers and Board Members

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Prez Sez



Marge Ahrens, President
League of Women Voters
Topeka/Shawnee County

“The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that voting is a fundamental citizen right that must be guaranteed.” *

For this reason, we have grabbed hold of the facts and meanings of the new Kansas “Safe Act” which requires photo ID for all voters beginning this January 2012, and requires proof of citizenship for all voter registrants beginning January 2013. The Capital Journal said that the Legislature may UP the implementation date of the voter registration portions of the law to March, 2012.

In November we put out a call for volunteers to register as many voters as possible in conjunction with other organizations. MANY League members, led by Anita Epps and Bernadette Forge, have maintained the voter registration momentum and have offered LWV services to local organizations. Bernadette sent a letter to the editor on the issue that brought fifty-three web responses.

And we verified the “rumor”. It

could be that only three months remain before the new voter registration law goes into effect. There has been little or no public information about the requirements, significance and complications of the new law. Early implementation may hinder more citizens from registering to vote. Citizens have a right to know.** The period for public comment is NOW.

We have made a plan. We ask each of you to lobby your legislators on the importance of NOT MOVING UP the voter registration law to a date earlier than the established date of 1/13. We will share our new information about the complications of implementing both Voter ID and Registration with all those who will hear. We will see if there is a safe way in which the League could continue to register voters after implementation of the new law.

Marge



*League of Women Voters of the United States, Impact On Issues: 2010-2012, A Guide to Public Policy Positions. 2011. Washington, LWVUS, p. 13.

** IBID, p. 22.

U.S. Election Assistance Commission Research Finds Polling-Place ID Laws Reduce Minority Voter Turnout

Advocates express deep concern over the report's findings

Washington D.C - Advocates expressed deep concern today over new data that suggests Latinos, Asian Americans, and African Americans are less likely to vote as a result of increasingly restrictive voter identification (ID) requirements. These findings are the result of preliminary research presented to the United States Election Assistance Commission (EAC) by the Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers University.

Researchers found that in the 2004 election, all voters, in states requiring voters to present documentation establishing their identity at the polls, were 2.7 percent less likely to vote than voters in states where no documentation was required. Latinos were 10 percent less likely to vote, Asian-Americans 8.5 percent less likely to vote and African Americans 5.7 percent less likely to vote.

“The study confirms that voter ID requirements keep more minority than white voters away from the polls,” said Maxine Nelson, President of Project Vote, a national nonpartisan organization that supports voter registration and voter education programs “When you think about the many close races in the past two elections cycles, this documented disparity raises profound questions about the legitimacy of our democratic system.”

“The biggest threat to the integrity of our electoral process is laws that prevent rather than encourage American citizens from casting a ballot,” said Arturo Vargas, Executive Director of the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO) Educational Fund, a national leadership organization dedicated to facilitating the full participation of Latinos in the American political process. “As the research suggests, restrictive voter identification laws are a potential threat to participatory democracy in the United States,” concluded Vargas.

“This data should serve as a wake-up call to those who didn’t think that restrictive ID provisions would harm voter participation and turnout,” said Mary G. Wilson, national president of the League of Women Voters. “This is one more confirmation that ID requirements have harmful effects. We must recognize that not everyone has ID with their current name and address and we must assure that no segment of voters is disenfranchised because of ID requirements,” she said. The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, has worked for more than 87 years to improve our systems of government and impact public policies through citizen education and advocacy.

“The small sample of Asian Americans is disconcerting,” said Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund (AALDEF) staff attorney Glenn D. Magpantay. In 2004, AALDEF conducted a multilingual exit poll of almost 11,000 Asian American voters in eight states, the largest nonpartisan survey of its kind in the nation. AALDEF found that 66 percent of Asian American voters who did not have to show identification were required to provide identification.

The Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA) required states to institute voter ID requirements in federal elections for certain first-time voters who register by mail. Since 2004, several states have adopted stricter ID requirements that go far beyond HAVA’s mandates. These requirements not only place considerable burdens on the voters examined in the research, but on the elderly, persons with disabilities, students, and rural and low-income voters. While proponents of restrictive voter ID requirements argue that they are needed to combat voter fraud, there is no evidence that the type of fraud that these requirements address – voters who misrepresent their identity – is anything but an anomaly.

The US Election Assistance Commission contracted with the Eagleton Institute of Politics to study the impact of ID requirements on voting. Researchers used Current Population Survey (CPS) data from November 2004 to compare turnout data from states where voters had to present a document with their name and current address to states where voters only had to give their names. They then created a statistical model to isolate the effect of ID requirements from other factors affecting turnout. They presented their preliminary findings at an EAC hearing on February 8, 2007. The EAC is expected to release a complete report on voter ID later this year.

VOTER SERVICE REPORT

By Anita Epps

Voter registration activities have continued at a variety of sites during the past two months. Voters were registered at several schools during activities which were attended by parents and students. Forms completed at each of those events numbered less than ten. We also were at Let's Help two times to register incoming and returning GED students as well as another date at the lunch site. Eight GED students registered to vote, and we had nine lunch participants who completed forms. At the November Naturalization Proceedings, where Ms. Cheryl Brown-Henderson gave the address of welcome, we registered 19 of the 36 new citizens who came from 21 countries. Following Tuesday Topics and LWVTSC board meeting in December, we have had successful voter registration efforts at the TSC Public Library where we have registered 21 people. We will be there one more Tuesday and then take a short break.

Able and creative assistance has been provided by Bernadette Forge, a newer member of the League. Bernadette has worked on several projects to augment our education and registration efforts. She prepared a laptop **computer video** to have running during voter registration events which explains why to register (never before registered, address change, name change, party affiliation change, registered before but have not voted in several elections). She also prepared a **cover letter and information flyers** which were mailed to churches and community organizations in the Highland Park and East Topeka neighborhoods which provided basic information about the new voting laws (SAFE Act) and encouraged prompt registration/re-registration. Editorial input on these mailings was also provided by Marge Ahrens and Anita Epps. This information was sent to Ernestine Krehbiel, Kansas League President, who forwarded it to all League chapters in Kansas for their use. Channel 4, City of Topeka communications division, may also use this information on the community bulletin board. Bernadette also wrote a **letter to the editor** of the Topeka Capital-Journal which elicited 55 responses on

CJ Online.com. This is all in addition to singly registering voters at Scott Magnet School, Antioch Life Center and Oakland Community Center and making telephone contact with other social service agencies. **Thank you, Bernadette.**



Help Wanted!

Observers

- for Shawnee County Health Department monthly meetings
- for school board meetings (Topeka, Washburn, Seaman, Shawnee Heights)

Be the first to know! Get firsthand information and provide the League with a brief summary of the board's actions.

Call Marge at 232-1947.

Membership Aide

Help keep us in order and lively!

We have had an 18% growth since Spring, 2011 and our membership chair, Teresa Stambaugh needs a helper!

Call her at 862-6621

In Memoriam:

Pauline Love, 100, died Dec. 8, 2011

Comments by **Grace Wilson**:

On behalf of the League of Women Voters and for me personally, I would like to extend condolences to Pauline's family. Pauline was an absolutely brilliant person, who volunteered to chair our local League's Strategic Defense Initiative Study some years ago - I'm not sure who else could have done this so well! She had so much to add to our all our discussions with her incisive thinking and questions. I enjoyed her so much and I wish everyone in our current membership could have known her. She had moxie! This is the only word I could think of to describe her completely - it means gameness, heart, pluck, spirit, undauntedness, spunk, and skill. Don't you think that describes her well?

~

Pauline J. Shipp Love, 100, Topeka, Kansas, passed away Dec. 8, 2011. Pauline and her twin brother, Paul Shipp, were born in Herington, Kansas, April 22, 1911. Their parents were Elda May Johnson and Francis (Frank) Shipp. Pauline attended grade schools in Herington, San Diego, Manhattan, Holton, and Alma. She graduated from the Alma High School in 1929, as the valedictorian of the class. In high school she took the normal training courses. After passing the state examinations she was licensed to teach. She taught in one room schools in Wabaunsee County and attended summer school at Kansas State University. She enrolled in the Kansas State Teachers College in Emporia as a sophomore. She received a BS in Education and graduated in 1937 cum laude. For a year she served as Assistant Librarian at Baker University and then went to the Atchison High School as its first librarian. After her marriage to Donald Love she moved to Chicago. There she worked for a year on the Index Medicine for the American Medical Association. She then accepted the position of Editorial Assistant in the publishing department of the American Library Association. She became the editor and then the Director of the Publishing Department which published books and magazines for librarians. In her position at the American Library Association, she worked with librarians in all types of libraries in the United States and throughout the world. Pauline traveled widely for business and for pleasure in the United States, Canada, and Europe. In 1981 she moved from Evanston, Illinois to Aldersgate Village, Topeka, Kansas. She was a long time volunteer at St. Francis Hospital and the Topeka Shawnee County Public Library. Pauline was a member of First Lutheran Church, the League of Women Voters and the American Library Association. She was preceded in death by her older brother Merl Shipp and her brother, Edward Olson. She is survived by her twin brother, Paul Shipp, Salina; sisters, Ida Thomas, Harveyville and Marian Orton, Topeka; and numerous nephews and nieces. Memorial service will be scheduled at a later date. Memorial contributions are suggested to First Lutheran Church and/or The Good Samaritan Fund at Aldersgate Village, sent in care of Kevin Brennan Family Funeral Home, 2801 SW Urish Rd, Topeka KS 66614.

Welcome to New League Members

Look at our membership grow! We have lots of great new members because you have been telling your friends of our mission and you are asking them to become a part of this work. Please continue to invite people to join the League. We can accomplish so much more with interested and committed members! Thank you.

Teresa Stambaugh Membership Chair

New Member 2011

Resa Boydston (April)

Mary and Ken Kerle (April)

Mary Galligan (May)

Sandra Powell (May)

Margaret Gatewood (May)

James McHenry (May)

Linda Williams (June)

Ginny Dowell (August)

Shelley Bulkley (August)

Marty Frisbie (August)

Grace Patterson (September)

Cora Spencer (September)

Alice Wurtz (October)

Barbara Lerma (November)

Marilyn Schroeder (November)

Candy Caufield (December)

Ronald Epps (December)



WOW!!!!

Photo ID and proof of citizenship topics at December meeting

By Grace L. Wilson

At the December Tuesday Topics, Brad Bryant from the Kansas Secretary of State's office talked about the Kansas Secure and Fair Elections ("SAFE") Act. He explained that the office invited anyone from the County Clerks Association to serve on a task force to work on implementing the new law. Eighteen people volunteered and had three day-long discussions, plus a fourth session working on envelope design.

Bryant said that while this group was developing procedures to be used, he kept hearing three things: 1) That while everyone was not a 100 percent supporter, the debate was over and the law passed; 2) "Let's design procedures that will be best for the voters, not just for us;" and 3) "Let's develop plans so as to have as few provisional or challenged ballots as possible."

Provisional ballots are not a negative thing, Bryant said. Before 1993, if votes showed up not qualified, they were turned away. Now poll workers are trained not to turn away such voters, but to provide them with a provisional ballot.

The "SAFE" Act was passed 36 to 3 by the Kansas Senate and 111 to 11 by the Kansas House. Beginning January 1, 2012, voters will be required to show an approved photo ID at the polls. If there is a religious objection, a voter may sign an affidavit. Persons 65 and older may use an expired ID. Overseas and military balloting will not require a photo ID, nor will local level mail-in ballot elections.

Voters registering for the first time can get a free non-driver ID from the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV). Voters already registered to vote by January 1, 2011, do not have to re-register with a photo ID. They are "grandfathered/mothered in."

There are two categories of Advance voters. A person can go to the election office in person and show photo ID for an advance ballot. Or a person can apply for a ballot by mail, write their driver's license number on the application, or fax a photo ID. If voters want to be on the Permanent Advanced Voter list, they may fill out a form stating the nature of their illness or disability. A voter only has to sign up for this once. The statewide PAV list has about 17,000 voters on it.

Beginning January 1, 2013, new voters must show proof of citizenship in order to be registered. **Attempts are being made to move the date for proof of citizenship up [to March 2012?].** Documents indicating valid proof of citizenship may be presented anytime up until the day before the election by mail or in person.

By midnight the day before the election, proof of citizenship may be faxed, or scanned and emailed, possibly even using a picture taken of it from your camera. If they were born in Kansas, citizens may request a free birth certificate from Vital Statistics. Soon the federal "Real ID" law, an offshoot of the Patriot Act will be requiring proof of citizenship to acquire a driver's license.

For "Third-Party" Voter Registration Drives [such as a registration table by the League of Women Voters], proof of citizenship might be provided with 1) a copy of their birth certificate right then, 2) separately submitting it to the Election Commissioner's Office, or 3) possibly having the drive volunteer take a photo of it.

A person has a right to appeal to the State Election Board which includes the Secretary of State, the Attorney General, and the Lieutenant Governor.

A Voter Education campaign for which the legislature allocated \$300,000 will attempt to educate the public about the "SAFE" requirements through radio, TV, cable, newspaper, websites, and perhaps notices in things like utility bills.

Eric Rucker, Assistant Secretary of State, also attended the meeting and responded to some questions. He was not able to give a total cost estimate of implementing the "SAFE" Act. Only five or six cases of voter fraud have been reported, two were out of their county of residence and two from out-of-state. Rucker said county prosecutors were too busy to prosecute the cases reported to them.

League member Diana Siegal stood and said she would rather see a few cases of voter fraud, rather than disenfranchise people who have the right to vote. The audience applauded her.

For information on acceptable forms of photo ID and valid proof of citizenship, contact: Kansas Secretary of State's Office, 120 SW 10th Ave, Topeka, KS, 66612; 1-800-262-8683 (VOTE) or 1-785-296-4561, FAX: 1-785-291-3051, www.sos.gov or election@sos.gov

A special thank-you to Anita Epps for making the original arrangements for December Tuesday Topics speakers from the Secretary of States' office.



Your vote is the great equalizer; as important as that of our President or a CEO.

Call or write your Kansas legislators now and tell them to WAIT to implement voter registration proof of citizenship changes of the Kansas "SAFE ACT" until the currently designated date of January 1, 2013.

Why?

The new law complicates voter registration for all new voters, requiring an original or copy of their birth certificate or passport, military ID, etc. be presented or copied at the time of registration.

For those who cannot locate their birth certificate, the current Kansas Vital Statistics website says first you need a photo ID.

But the Department of Motor Vehicles is in the process of requiring a copy of a birth certificate to get a photo ID.

If a citizen was born in another state already requiring photo ID to get a copy of a birth certificate (Texas, Arizona, Florida, Colorado, for example), that person will not be able to secure the birth certificate in order to get a new photo ID in Kansas.

There is no plan in place to protect identity theft when a birth certificate, etc. is copied, carried, or transmitted by fax when used to register to vote.

Both Democrats and Republicans voted in favor of the "SAFE ACT" (36 to 3 in the Kansas Senate and 111 to 11 in the House). Ask each of your Kansas Senators and Representatives to refuse to move the date of implementation of the proof of citizenship requirement to any time earlier than it is now.

The League of Women Voters of Topeka/Shawnee County.

December 2011

Topeka Shawnee County League Fund drive update:

I want to thank all of those who have already submitted their donation. Because of your contributions we have been able to register new voters, and prepare information to better inform the public on critical issues.

If you forgot or just have not gotten around to sending a donation it is not too late. Even a donation of \$10 or \$20 will go a long way in meeting our goal.

Margaret Mead said: "Never Doubt that a small group of Thoughtful committed citizens can change the world." The local league continues to make this community a better place to live through all our actions because we are committed citizens. It is the power of simple acts that make a difference.

Please make donations payable to: LWV-TSC They can be sent to:

Nancy Wagner
4452 Maryland
Topeka, KS 66609
Finance, Chair

Thanks again for your dedication to this organization,
Nancy Wagner

2011 LWVTSC FINANCE REPORT

The Topeka Shawnee County League of Women Voters 2011 fund drive has collected a total of \$1,700.00 as of December 11 2011. The amount given to the education fund was \$65.00. The amount given the general fund was \$1635.00. The break down is as follows.

Member gifts = 1,440.00
non Member gifts = 50.00
anonymous gift = 210.00
Total = \$1,700.00
less expenses -181.00
Net = \$1,519.00

Nancy Wagner, Finance Chair

Report on State Finance Tax Study

~ we had a meeting Nov. 19th with about 10 people attending.

The purpose of the meeting was to review the current LWVK State Finance Position to see if any changes need to be made of the current Position so that we can talk to our legislators about it during the upcoming session. We determined that the current P~ we had a meeting Nov. 19th with about 10 people attending. The purpose of the meeting was to review the current LWVK State Finance Position to see if any changes need to be made of the current Position so that we can talk to our legislators about it during the upcoming session. We determined that the current Position is still appropriate. We also identified about 20 questions that should be answered with White Papers.

The questions that have been assigned to someone to draft a White Paper include the following:

“What is a Flat Tax?” Carol Jacobson

“What would be the impact on state revenue if sales tax is removed from food purchases?” Liz Post & Shelley Bulkley

“Will a reduction in income taxes increase jobs in Kansas?” Carol Jacobson

“Economic Policy - Carol Wadsworth

“What is the impact of a sales tax on utilities?” Mary Galligan

“What impact would the elimination of the federal estate tax have on state revenue?” Carole Neal

Additional questions to be answered, but which have not yet been assigned, include:

“Should the State Finance position include a recommendation concerning sales tax on internet sales?”

“What would be the impact of the elimination of income tax credits on taxes paid to other states?”

“What would be the revenue impact of removing in-

come tax on corporations?”

“Does the State Finance position need to enhance the definition of adequacy?”

“Should LWVK recommend more tax brackets on income? “If so, what is the impact on taxpayers?”

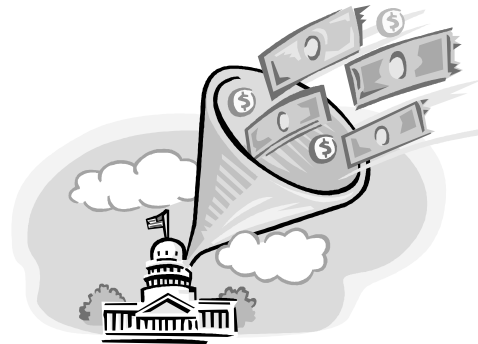
“Should LWVK recommend a performance review on sales tax exemptions?”

“How do State agencies get their funding?” (Budget cycle, Revenue Consensus, Legislative Session)

“What may be the impact of additional reduction in State finance to education in Kansas?”

“What would be the impact of future budget cuts on the State Justice System?”

We anticipate having an initial draft of the White Paper for members to review before the Governor's State of the State address on January 11.



DEMOCRACY
NEEDS
YOU



The Intergovernmental Cooperative Council

is made up of school, local government, and community and business leaders. In April of 2010, the ICC adopted the following statement:

Through the Heartland Visioning process, the Topeka and Shawnee County community has expressed its desire for local government to work cooperatively and collaboratively, resulting in quality services to citizens and responsible stewardship of public resources. Therefore, the ICC as representatives of the taxing entities in Topeka and Shawnee County, will work together to achieve results on those strategies within its authority and purview.

Intergovernmental Cooperative Council October 18, 2011

ICC member, Rust Doty, Shawnee Heights school board and also with Blue Cross Blue Shield, presented information on Health Care Reform. He said that administering the new regulations will be very complex for employers. He presented a timeline for the key changes, and explained many details.

Dr. Brenda Dietrich (USD 437 Superintendent and the chair of this group) presented a draft of the brochure describing the history and purpose of the ICC.

Intergovernmental Cooperative Council November 15, 2011

Presentation from Dave Sterbenz, ICC member and Shawnee County Director of Emergency Management. Dave covered many aspects of emergency planning.

January meeting: Continuation of Health Care Reform with ICC member, Rusty Doty.

USD 501 assumes chair position.

LWVUS Privatization Study

Would You Like to Join the Study Committee?

The purpose of the National LWV Privatization Study is to identify those parameters and policy issues to be considered in connection with proposals to transfer federal, state or local government services, assets and/or functions to the private sector. It will review the stated goals and the community impact of such transfers, and identify strategies to ensure transparency, accountability, and preservation of the common good.

The study committee will provide a history and background of privatization, a glossary of terms, legal issues to be considered when privatizing at different levels of government, current state regulations on privatizing and case studies on successful and unsuccessful privatizing efforts. Finally, the committee will provide suggested policies and parameters to be considered when privatizing.

The timeline is: October, 2011, information to be provided to local Leagues.

November 2011 to May 2012 – Leagues are encouraged to participate in the study on Privatization of Government Services, Assets and Functions, and the impact on local communities by scheduling meetings to educate members and communities about the issue and come to consensus. Study materials are now posted on the LWVUS website, lww.org. Other recommended reading includes:

1. [The Meaning of Privatization](#), Paul Starr, Yale Law and Policy Review 6 (1988) 6-41
2. [Privatization: A Seattle League Study](#)
3. [Government Privatization: History, Examples, and Issues](#)

[Call Marge Ahrens at 232-1947 if you are interested in the issue or just want a great experience being part of a LWV study committee!](#)

[MORE INFORMATION ON THE STUDY BELOW](#)



The Study Committee on Privatization

will have its monthly meeting this coming Thursday, December 15th, beginning at 5:15 p.m., in an upstairs meeting room at the Public Library. The January study committee meeting will be at 1:00 p.m. in the same location. You are always welcome to attend. See you this Tuesday! Gwen

Board Briefs

By Lea Billinger, secretary



December 13, 2011 LWV Board meeting at the library, 8 board members were present.

- Our League has had an 18% increase in membership since April!
 - Discussion of the SAFE Act, and its difficulties. Marge plans to draft a letter for state legislators, telling them why moving the effective date up to March is not a good idea. We will encourage our members and other Leagues to weigh in on this, as well.
 - Maryanna will be on Ralph Hipp's show again, December 26.
 - Georgia is going to prepare a report on the ups and downs of Tuesday Topics attendance, and the cost and income for lunches, for the annual meeting. Managing lunches has been difficult.
- The Budget Committee needs to be formed, and to meet in January. Any volunteers?
 - The Finance Drive net total is \$1,510.
- We hope to find more members for the Observer Corps, to attend government sessions and meetings, and other things of interest, and report to the League.

Next board meeting will be January 10 at noon, TSCPL.

Dear City Council Members;

National League of Women Voters positions support equal rights and equal opportunity for all, and the promotion of social and economic justice. Likewise, the Kansas League supports action to combat discrimination.

As supporters of a proposed domestic partner registry in Topeka we believe it is more about facilitating business and equality than it is about same-sex relationships. The registry would, for a fee, allow certain unmarried couples to register their relationship for health benefit and hospital visitation purposes through participating employers. The registry would serve as a documented proof of the relationship by a governing body, a necessary aspect for some employers that extend benefits voluntarily to their employees' domestic partners. Passage of the registry could additionally show that Topeka is both an open and tolerant society for those who aren't considered the majority.

The registry is set for a vote during the November 29, 2011 Topeka City Council meeting. The League of Women Voters of Topeka-Shawnee County encourages you to vote to approve it.

Sincerely,
Marge Ahrens, President,

League of Women Voters of Topeka-Shawnee County

(I acted on the Registry vote by sending this letter to City Council Members.)



Reflections on the Proceedings of the Topeka City Council

(submitted by Joe Sargent)

(This report covers the period from mid-October to mid-December in 2011.)

The saga , previously discussed in the last reflection, continued to make headlines even after the council passed the repeal of the ordinance dealing with domestic battery on October 11th and followed the next day with the decision by the district attorney to resume prosecution of misdemeanors concerned with domestic battery in Topeka. To quell this controversy Stanley, the interim city manager, offered to prosecute all misdemeanors in Topeka except those associated with domestic violence with the proviso that officials in Shawnee County provided adequate funding for the district attorney's office. Subsequently, commissioner Buhler sent a letter to the district attorney stating that she wanted to review his budget.

On October 14th the council considered amendments to the merger contract of the Topeka and Shawnee County parks and recreation departments so that city employees will not be laid off or have a reduction in hours except for disciplinary reasons within six months after January 1st, 2012 when they become employees of Shawnee County . Also any city employee not retained by the county for three years would receive severance pay from the county as provided by the Topeka personnel policies. Apparently the county was in agreement with the amendments. On October 25th the council approved the amendments.

The balance for the city's self-insured health insurance plan is projected to be \$1.5 million after being \$7.5 million at the end of 2008. Without increased contributions from the employees it will likely run out of money in 2012 and so Stanley increased the contributions that employees need to make in 2012. However, no change in the contributions for those with single coverage can be made in 2012 because of union contracts but that will change in 2013. The city has increased its contributions by five per cent in 2012. On October 25th the council approved a \$1 million shift to the health insurance plan .In 2012 the plan's deductibles will increase for all employees

On October 20th it became public knowledge that the council's agenda on October 25th would include the proposed revision of its decision to wait six months to hire an executive

search firm to screen for possible candidates for the city manager position. The council voted to defer action. The contract with the interim city manager calls for his last day to be January 31st and he indicated on November 12th that he will not seek the city manager position via an e-mail to the council members. On November 15th the council passed a resolution to proceed with hiring the executive search firm.

Stanley stated that the 2011 budget estimates were overly optimistic and so there is a shortfall in the expected revenue of \$3.6 million. Consequently, the city will end 2011 with a projected balance of \$5.5 million, not much to cover emergencies. There is little that the city can do to make up for the lost revenue in 2011 . Stanley hopes that his revenue projections for 2012 will be more realistic.

On November 30th the council voted down the domestic partnership registry by a five to four margin . Council member Gray who sponsored the measure stated that it validated non-traditional relationships. There were ten persons in public testimony who spoke in favor of it with only speaker against it. Our president (Marge Ahrens) sent an e-mail to all council members on November 22nd in support of the registry.

The Joint Economic Development Organization (JEDO) on December 5th approved the contract with Go Topeka by a six to one margin with council member Gray dissenting. JEDO ,which is composed of all three county commissioners, the mayor, and three council members (Gray, Eberhart, and Alcalá) oversees the distribution of \$14 million raised annually through a countywide half -cent sales tax. Five million of this goes for economic development and JEDO has contracted with

Go Topeka to administer this program. Gray expressed concern about the lack of competitive bidding in Go Topeka obtaining the contract.

The Topeka Metropolitan Transit Authority (TMTA) recently applied for a \$25 million federal grant to establish a transportation hub at Forbes Field. It would link up various modes of transportation including Greyhound buses, railroad services, and an airport shuttle plus TMTA services

The council on December 13th revised the ordinance on the sale of fireworks around the fourth of July The discharge of fireworks will now only be for four days (July 1st-4th) while there will be no change in the number of days that they can be sold (June 27th to July 5th). The hours for discharging them will be from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. on July 1st-3rd and on July 4th from 8 a.m. to midnight.



Notes by Georgia Sandlin



Shawnee County
Commission Meetings

October 10, 2011 –

The commissioners held a short meeting this morning. Requests and contracts were approved for Information Technology, Health Agency and Parks and Recreation departments. Rich Eckert, Shawnee County Counselor, brought a contract with Menards regarding the construction of a roundabout at 17th and Urish Road. Public Works is recommending a two lane roundabout anticipating increased traffic in the future.

October 20, 2011

The commissioners voiced no issues in approving an amendment to the contract that consolidates the Topeka and Shawnee County parks and Recreation Departments. Employees of the city parks department have expressed some anxiety with their job security. Rich Eckert, County Counselor, reported to the commissioners that the added language fell within the original intent of the contract.

John Knight, Parks and Recreation, reported that administrators from both city and county have started working together. Mr. Knight also has brought updates to the city council regarding the consolidation of the parks and recreation departments.

Steve Bolton, solid waste, reported on a very successful event on Saturday, October 15, collecting hazardous waste at the Colorworks store at 4410 21st St. Owners of the store, Bob and Diana Swafford, were instrumental in bringing this opportunity for disposal of hazardous waste to a more central location. The turnout exceeded their expectations as an estimated 400 people dropped off paints, paint thinners and stains. The Swaffords would like to have another such event on Earth Day.

October 24, 2011

Commissioner Buhler appeared perplexed as to why they were asked to approve a resolution to cancel and reissue checks as old as 2007 and 2008. She moved to defer action until she could have more information from County Treasurer Larry Wilson. The motion to defer passed 3-0.

Marilyn Nichols, Register of Deeds, brought a check to the

commission for \$35,000. This is money from fees for each transaction in the Register of Deed's office.

H.R. Cook, Expocentre, brought a contract for approval of an Irish Setter National Specialty Dog Show in 2014. We still haven't heard of long-range plans for our Expocentre.

Wannamaker between SW 29th and SW 33rd streets will be widened earlier than expected. Shawnee County Public Works changed plans to work on NW Topeka Blvd because KDOT will be working in the area in 2013 so Mr. Vlach will bring his crews to SW Wannamaker instead.

November 3, 2011

The two most interesting items on the agenda this morning were under "Unfinished Business". The first was a routine resolution authorizing the County Treasurer to reissue a check. When the commissioners asked for an update on the opening of the annex tension ensued. County Treasurer announced another delay until after the end of the year. The previous deadline had been the middle of this month. Mr. Wilson explained that the state had initiated a new software system and until it is ready to go it would not be cost effective to move. All three commissioners were visibly frustrated by the Treasurer's announcement

Two other resolutions under "Unfinished business" pertained to the agreement prepared for a health insurance plan for county employees. Commissioner Thomas asked for a deferment until Monday so she could study the proposed plan.

Dick Kline, Corrections, came to the commission with two contracts. One was for inmate health services. Mr. Kline reported they would receive the same services for a 2% increase in payments. The other contract was for food services which also called for an increase in payments, although they were able to negotiate a slightly lower price.

Not everything is costing more. Tom Vlach, Public Works, reported that the 12,000 tons of sand the department purchased was down by \$.05 a ton.

November 7, 2011

The resolution regarding the health plan for county employees returned to the commission. Commissioner Thomas presented a plan that was slightly different from the one presented at the previous meeting. Commissioners Buhler and Ensley didn't go for the new plan so passed the original 2-1.

Continued from page 12

The item that packed the meeting room was next. The planning commission had recommended that the commissioners deny a request to change zoning that would allow an automotive shop to operate at 5020 SE Adams. Residents in the area and the attorney and friends of Roger Crouch (owner of the property) came to report to the commission the pros and cons of this resolution. The commissioners tabled the resolution for more information. My guess is, most of these people will be back for the final decision.

November 10, 2011

Every month Stacey Woolington, Director of Audit Finance, reports to the commission on the current expenditures and revenues. The commissioners don't want to be surprised with shortfalls. Today she had good news. Expenditures are at, or below, what is expected. Revenues are at expected levels.

Rich Eckert, County Counselor, has been negotiating a contract with the FOP. Evidently, it has been a long process because they anticipated coming to terms before December 2010. Mr. Eckert quoted the saying, "A good contract is where both parties walk away unhappy." He reported that both parties were unhappy but felt the agreement was fair. The commissioners approved the agreement 3-0.

November 17, 2011

The consent agenda today included 15 items with many routine contracts and receipts. Several other items were pulled or deferred. The remaining business received increased attention. Stacey Woolington, Audit finance, reported to the commission that cash drawers in the Treasurer's office have been off and no disciplinary action has been taken. Ms. Woolington reported that her department has increased the frequency of the cash counts because of the "reoccurring offages".

John Knight reported that the Advisory Board for the "new" Parks and Recreation Department would meet the third Wednesday of the month at 5:30 in the City Council Meeting Room. The meeting will be televised. Jim Ogle is the chair of the committee.

Commissioner Thomas reported a federal grant of \$300,000 from the Federal Government to deal with domestic abuse. She will make it known to the DA.

November 21, 2011

This morning's meeting began with recognition of Detective Bryan Clemmons for receiving the Kansas's Sheriff's Association's Deputy of the Year Award. The story of his

undercover work is fascinating. It included 70 hours of body wire recordings and being booked into the Shawnee County Jail. His work resulted in indictments for 6 individuals. Impressive.

The commissioners approved an increase in petty cash funds for the Parks and Recreation department. With the merger of city facilities cash for concessions, admissions and special events is considerably higher.

The Emergency Management department won approval to hire a new planner. This is another example of a department that did not hire to fill a position left by a retirement and now finds itself backed up in work.

There was a first reading of a resolution establishing purchasing procedures. Stacey Woolington is making changes. I believe this change will result in more monitoring. In keeping with more monitoring, Ms. Woolington reported she is not satisfied with the change Larry Wilson made to the Treasurer's office to remedy the cash drawers being out of balance in the Treasurer's office. The story continues.

December 1, 2011

Under Unfinished Business the resolution establishing purchasing procedures returned with some changes. Commissioner Buhler asked all department heads to review the proposal one last time before the commission acted on it.

John Knight, Parks and Recreation, requested permission to staff Cypress Ridge golf course and secure a contract for the pro shop. The commissioners are not ready to fill all Parks positions until they know who will transfer from the city department.

Shawnee County is required to change to a digital radio system. Sheriff Barta and Police Chief Miller were ready for a lease/purchase with Motorola. The commissioners wanted to look at other options and now they are sending several representatives of the county to look at the Casidian system in Richardson, Texas.

Commissioner Buhler read a letter from Kansas Attorney General, Derek Schmidt, stating that his office would not investigate the Shawnee County Treasurer's office since the Shawnee County District Attorney is doing so.

December 5, 2011

The home rule resolution regarding purchasing procedures for the county was approved this morning after being changed and reviewed more than once.

Other business included housekeeping contracts and reso-

lutions.

The agenda item that brought some discussion concerned the meeting with the Shawnee County Legislative Delegation. It was agreed that keeping the requests to a minimum was important. Three issues were agreed on. The first was changing the term of the County Treasurer. Technology negates the need for months to prepare financial books to be transferred to another county treasurer. The second was the need to change the liability of a county jail system for the harm of an inmate. Currently, so many inmates have mental health issues, prone to self-injury; "gross and wanton negligence" would be a more appropriate liability term. The third would allow a government entity to sell a cemetery if it has market value. Currently, a cemetery is to be held as a government property in perpetuity if ownership is defaulted to the county.

Dina Pennington reported to the commission the plea that the Juvenile Corrections Advisory Board will make to the Shawnee County Delegation regarding the governor's plan to move Juvenile corrections under the authority of SRS.

December 8, 2011

The commission meeting hummed along with business as usual this morning until the end of the agenda. First we learned that the department of corrections will take prisoners from KDOC for the work release program. Then we learned the IT department and the coroner have been able to save money by combining positions. We heard from Steve Bolton that the Household Hazardous Waste facility will be improved.

Then with little fanfare Eric Theel, IT director, announced that the Treasurer's annex will be ready to install electronic equipment around December 29. Completion should be within the first week of January, opening the following week. Welcome news.

December 12, 2011

Judging from the testimony at the commission meeting this morning things aren't very pleasant in Pleasant Hills Subdivision in Shawnee County. A petition was circulated in favor of a leash law but before the petition could be acted upon another was circulated to remove names on the first petition. Several citizens reported to the commissioners on how a leash law is needed or not needed. Signatures need to be validated, more petitions may be

forthcoming. This issue may return to the commission Dec. 19.

Barry Beagle, Planning, presented a proposed zoning change for the area bordered by I-470 on the north, SW 93rd on the south SW Burlingame Road on the west, and Forbes Field on the east. Representatives from Go Topeka and Bartlett and West reported to the commissioners why this area is ideal for economic development – mostly due to easy access to transportation, highways, railroad, and air. Two citizens expressed opposition to the change in zoning. This presentation was a first step. Open houses will be held for public information and input in January and February.

Ten other agenda items were addressed with little fanfare. Before the meeting was adjourned Stacey Woolington stepped to the podium to report suspect activity in the Treasurer's office. Apparently, some employees are paid from the general fund and the motor vehicle fund. Treasurer Wilson changed the split from 75% from the general fund to 60% from the general fund. Ms. Woolington reported that any money not used by the treasurer's office from the general fund is returned to county coffers at the end of the year. She questioned whether the treasurer's office was using money that should be returned to the county.

LWV Topeka January 3 presentation -- Karen McCulloh.

Karen McCulloh is currently chair of the Manhattan/Riley County Law Enforcement Advisory Board. She was Riley County Commissioner from 1993-1997 and currently, beginning in 2009. Karen was also a City Commissioner from 1997-2001 and Mayor from 2000-2001. She is a League of Women Voters member and was the past president for two terms. She will be speaking with us about how the consolidation has been working, a bit about the history of how it all came about in the first place and how the League was involved in a campaign for consolidation.

In case of bad weather on Tuesday, Jan. 3, we have ordered the film "American Blackout."

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