

Voter Services News

We have lots to do as Topeka and the rest of the County prepare for the November election. The most intense part of that work is being done by the League's volunteers who conduct the school voter education program. Those fine volunteers have made presentations (or will before the registration deadline) in seven public high schools in the county. As of press time, 509 students attended one of the presentations and 154 had registered to vote online at KSVotes.org. (For a variety of technical reasons, we don't necessarily get an exact count of all the students who register because of our education effort.) We thank each and every one of the volunteers, teachers, and school administrators who have cooperated to make this effort a success.

For the rest of us, let's review the basics:

Local Elections Are Important

The Topeka City Council:

- sets the City budget, which determines the city's portion of the property tax,
- establishes city sales tax within limits set by state law,
- establishes zoning and other land-use rules impacting development and redevelopment within the city,
- hires the City Manager, and
- establishes policy for city operation through the City Manager, which includes:
 - Water Department,
 - Fire Department,
 - Police Department,
 - Public Works Department, and
 - Municipal Court, among others – all of which can and do impact the daily lives of city residents.

The Topeka Mayor and City Council have an impact in other arenas, too. **Washburn University** and its students, faculty and staff have an interest in municipal elections since the Mayor of Topeka serves on the Washburn Board of Regents and appoints three other Regents (for four of the nine-member Board). In addition, all City Council members, along with the County Commissioners, are members of the Topeka/Shawnee County Joint Economic Development Organization (JEDO) with the Topeka Mayor, Deputy Mayor and two Council members serving as voting members. JEDO allocates tax revenue to businesses to encourage economic development. Other city councils in the County deal with matters of equal importance to residents of their cities.

Local School Boards face challenges as we have seen over the past year+. At each meeting, school boards make decisions that directly impact the education, health, and wellbeing of our children.

We urge you to take all municipal and school board elections very seriously. To help with your candidate research, we encourage you to [register](#) for and attend the Topeka Mayoral and City Council Candidate Forum, Tuesday, Sept. 28 at 6 PM on Zoom. You will receive the actual Zoom link after you register.

It's up to us. Leaguers, we know the drill:

- **Reach out to at least 10 people** in your circle of friends, family, and neighbors and encourage them to check their registration status and be ready to **VOTE**. If you'd like to use an online tool to help you with that, check out [Voter to Voter](#), from the Mainstream Coalition, a Kansas non-profit familiar to many of us.
- **Make a plan to vote** – early in person, early with a mail-in ballot, OR in person on Election Day. Encourage all your friends, family, and acquaintances to do likewise. October is a busy month and **Election Day, November 2**, will come up fast. If your plan includes voting early, request an advance mail ballot NOW online at [KSVotes.org](#) and **VOTE** in the comfort of your home with easy access to your candidate research. Return your ballot to the Election Office ON OR BEFORE November 2, election day. If you mail your ballot, leave ample time for your ballot to reach the Election Office by election day. There is no longer a grace period after the election. If your plan is to **VOTE early in person, you can do that beginning October 18** (8 a.m. to 6 p.m.) at the Election Office – 3420 SW Van Buren.

... And now, for redistricting news

The League of Women Voters of Kansas is conducting a map drawing contest open to all undergraduate college and university students throughout Kansas. Students may enter individually or form a team. More information is available on the LWVTSC Fair Votes Fair maps [webpage](#).

The deadline for contest entries is Friday, October 22, 2021 by 11:59 p.m. to contactus@lwvk.org with the subject line of “District Map Contest Entry”. Winners will be announced Friday, November 19, 2021, at noon.

Contestants must use [Dave's Redistricting](#) to draw maps. Each map will be judged based on criteria for completeness, compactness, and contiguity, as well as compliance with the state and federal population thresholds, and written justification for any deviation from the criteria.

At the local level, we are continuing our **Community of Interest workshops** to provide members of the League and others in our community with a means by which to develop meaningful input to legislators regarding the redistricting process. If you are interested in participating in or hosting a Community of Interest workshop, contact [Mary](#).

Keep up the good work,
Richie McDanel and Mary Galligan, Co-chairs
Voter Services