



**THE LEAGUE  
OF WOMEN VOTERS®**

# VOTER

Emporia, Kansas

<http://emporia.lwv.org>

PRESIDENT: Jacque Heckman-James(jacqueline1723@cablone.net, 343-1211) April, 2008

EDITOR: Diana Solis (djsolis@grapevine.net)

Volume 53, Number 8

## Calendar

April 30	Board Meeting Havenhill Residence Wednesday, 7 pm	Combined meeting of the 2007 Board and 2008 Board. Everyone is welcome,.
May 7	Hot Topics Luncheon Wednesday, 11:30-1:00 1230 West St	Kayla Oney, Emporia Main Street, will be the speaker on plans and planning for downtown Emporia. Kay Calvert will prepare a delicious luncheon. \$10.00 donation or more. RSVP to Kay at 342-7104 by May 5 <sup>th</sup> .

*The League of Women Voters, a non-partisan political organization, encourages informed and active Participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.*

**Information on the Kansas League of Women Voters can be found at <http://lwvk.org>**

**The National League of Women Voters is at [www.lwv.org](http://www.lwv.org)**

### President's Note:

### 2008-2009 Officers and Directors

President:	Diana Solis	
1 <sup>st</sup> Vice President:	Sherry Backhus	
2 <sup>nd</sup> Vice President:	Bill Jensen	
Secretary:	Robbie Hill	
Treasurer:	Jack Havenhill	
Directors:	Barbara Blaufuss	Jackie Scott
	Jerry Fair	Teresa Walters
	Marty Hager	Judy Wild

## 2008-2009 Committee Chairs

Local Study	Barbara Blaufuss & Jerry Fair
State Study	Bill Jensen
Observer	
Membership	Ann Havenhill
Voter Service – Voter Registration	Marty Hager
Candidate Forums & Eggs & Issues	Teresa Walters
Meeting/Program Arrangements	Jackie Scott
Finance Drive	Mary Downing & Barbara Jensen
Voter	Barbara Blaufuss
Web Site	Sherry Backhus
Publicity	Jacque James

### **Approved Local Study for 2008-2009:**

At the Annual Meeting the local study for 2008-2009 was approved as follows:

“A study of the tax structure in Emporia/Lyon County. This study would include Property tax, sales tax, tax abatements etc. etc.”

No consensus was proposed at this time, but could follow in the 2009-2010 League year.

### **HOT TOPICS LUNCHEON – MAY 7<sup>TH</sup>,**

Kay & Jim Calvert’s                      1230 West St  
11:30 am to 1:00 pm – stay as long as your lunch time will allow  
Speaker: Kayla Oney, Emporia Main Street Executive Director

Speaking on the developing plans for downtown Emporia. \$10.00 or more donation to League of Women Voters of Kansas Endowment Fund. All food is provided by Kay and Jim Calvert. Please RSVP to Kay at 342-7104 by May 5<sup>th</sup>. Make checks payable to LWVK Endowment Fund.

## **Eggs & Issues –March 29th**

Over 50 people met Saturday, the 29<sup>th</sup>, at the Lyon County Courthouse, to hear and question County Commissioners Scott Briggs, Bob Davis, and Marshall Miller and Financial Director Dan Slater.

Chariman Briggs opened the forum with good things are happening in Lyon County. The county is being ran as efficient as the Commission can. The County is paying off bonds early to save dollars, and it has been a tough year on the roads in the county.

Marshall Miller stated this is an election year, June 10<sup>th</sup> is the filing deadline, and he would not be running for his position. Sales tax collected for February 2008 is the highest February ever. Investments in February 2007 were paying 5%, in February 2008 they are paying less than 2 ½%. The Extention Building downtown has been purchased by the Farm. The old Courthouse is almost full with non-profit organizations paying rent. The Springstead group has done a study of the Law Enforcement and a report should be coming shortly.

Bob Davis issued the same statement that he would not be a candidate for County Commissioner. It takes 115,000 tons of rock to maintain the roads per year in Lyon County and when looking for places to cut in the budget, do not cut out maintenance. In 2008, there will be \$26,000,000 capital investments new on the tax rolls, 2009 - \$11,250,000 valued property will be off tax abatement, and 2010 - \$18,700,000 valued property will be off tax abatement. Local employment is good even with the local layoffs, and the County has an excellent staff.

Questions from the floor ranged from increasing the website, Commission meeting at another time, if combining the law enforcement agencies is successful would other areas be considered, and what effect would the loss of people have on the County Health Department.

*by—Diana Solis*

## **Eggs & Issues – April 12<sup>th</sup>**

Eggs & Issues, featuring the Emporia City Commission, was held Saturday, April 12 at the Emporia Recreation Center. The mayor and all commissioners were in attendance, along with City Manager Matt Zimmerman.

Each of the commissioners opened the meeting with brief remarks, with the city budget being prevalent in each. In addition to starting to look at the budget, a new infrastructure and wage classification system has been proposed by the City Manager. The public will have opportunities to have input in both the budget and infrastructure changes at forums that will be announced soon.

Other areas that the commissioners brought up were the Tyson lay-offs and their impact on the community, the collaboration of city and county, housing codes which are being revisited because, as Mayor Johnson stated, ‘ “We want Emporia to be considered an inclusive community.” ‘, and the Buxton Study which was recently completed to help Emporia identify retailers which should or could be targeted for expansion to our community.

One attendee offered examples of how exposure to secondhand smoke had been a detriment to community members at an event and a local restaurant, and encouraged the commissioners to be forward thinking if and when efforts to adopt a smoke free ordinance in Emporia are brought to them.

The commissioners seemed to agree that we have an opportunity to help Emporia grow, and that they welcome and encourage all citizens to take the opportunities provided to make their viewpoints known.

The next Eggs & Issues forum will be Saturday, April 26 featuring the Emporia School Board. The forum will be held at the Mary Herbert Education Center, 1700 W. 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue.

*by—Teresa Walters*

## **Annual Meeting – March 26<sup>th</sup> - WE'VE MADE A DIFFERENCE**

50<sup>TH</sup> Anniversary of the League of Women Voters of Emporia

Kay Calvert, Kay Smalley and Ann Havenhill went through old League records and discovered way more than 30 minutes worth of material to use for a program covering what the League has done in Emporia in 50 years. Here are some of the highlights:

**The Early Days:** The program began with the introduction of some of the early members present for the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration -- Florence Shadt, Ellie Hazelrigg, Jacque Heckman James, Jerri Pennington, Lee Rowe, Kay Smalley and Kay Calvert. Jacque who was President in 1962 presented some early happenings in the League and noted that times have changed in 50 years. Leaguers are no longer known by their spouse's name (for example Mrs. Tom Tholen etc.) In fact the League now has men members.

**High School Bond Issue:** In the 1960's and 1970's the League was most instrumental in the community to finally get a bond issue passed for the new Emporia High School. It took 2 or 3 tries. Kay Calvert presented some pertinent information on the project. She mentioned over the time she worked closely with the school superintendent Carl James she became known as "Toots". There is an interesting written report on this project in the files which was written by Jerri Pennington.

**Library Study and Issue of New Building:** Jerri Pennington, who worked on this issue, presented information on the Library Study done in 1969 and the pending Bond issue which followed. The League again worked hard for passage of this bond issue. The Building was completed in 1979.

**Talk of the Town:** It was reported in 1982-1983 the League had a weekly presentation on Cable Channel 8. "Talk of the Town" presented information on issues of interest to the community. Merle Peterson was involved in this educational program. Several present at the Annual Meeting remembered being a part of this TV endeavor.

**Observer Corps:** Sarah Wyrick presented information on the importance of the Observer Corps in Emporia and Lyon County. Sarah asked all in attendance who had been observers to stand and be recognized.

**City and County Government:** The master of ceremonies made note that the League encourages members to participate in government. Past Mayor Lee Rowe and current Mayor Julie Johnson were introduced. Also introduced were past School Board member Jerry Fair and Lyon County Clerk Karen Hartenbower. All Leaguers who have served on various Boards and Commissions were also recognized.

**Recreation and Parks:** Kay Smalley presented information on the several studies beginning with 1969-1970. The League was involved in the planning and completion of the current Recreation Center. Kay shared the brochures developed over the years by the League on various Leisure Time activities available in Emporia. It was noted that the League lobbied the City Commission about the signs, or rather lack of signs, in the parks.

**Environment Studies: Energy, Water Quality, Conservation:** Sara Wyrick presented puppets

Connie Conservation, Edgar Energy and Wet Walter to the group. These were characters in a “show” on conservation for school children in all of Lyon County presented by League members in 1979.

Ann Havenhill presented information about the Pilot Recycling Project spearheaded by the League in 1989. This was the forerunner to the recycling program we have today and the establishment of the Recycling Advisory Board now known as the Natural Resources Advisory Board

**Voter Service:** This area is one of the most active for the League. The “Guide to Government” has been published every other year since the 1960’s. The League continues to be active in Voter Registration drives and Candidate Forums. We now work with the Chamber in providing Eggs and Issues events with our legislators and local Boards. Some newer programs are election notices on the Marquees around town, High School voting. In 2000 and 2002 the League and the Sunrise Rotary Club adopted precincts to improve voting in “low voter turnout” areas.

**The League has changed since 1957:** We have joined the electronic world and do a lot of correspondence via email. We have a LWVE Web Site. A new adventure for the League was the 4<sup>th</sup> of July float in 2007. The League got lots of good press by showing Past – Present – and Future elections. Most recently we had public forums on Immigration and plan to hold other public meetings in the future.

The League has “Made a Difference”. Each member is important. The reason we have been and continue to be a vibrant organization is ALL of you.

*by- Ann Havenhill*

## LEGISLATIVE E-REPORT

### LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF KANSAS

**Diane Kuhn, President**  
**Janis McMillen, Editor**

**Issue No. 8**  
**April 23, 2008**

---

The legislature will be returning next week (April 30) to complete this session. Major issues remain to be resolved, including health care, immigration, and the Omnibus bill with the final budget. During this legislative break, it has been determined that the revenues available for the 2009 will be greater than earlier projections, making spending decisions more difficult. Paul Johnson has provided a very good synopsis of the many programs and activities that will be affected by the budget decisions awaiting the legislators. Now is the time to let your legislators know where your priorities are in terms of what our state should be funding.

#### **Budget update**

The ripples from the national economy are starting to impact the State of Kansas budget. The consensus revenue estimators met on April 16 and lowered the revenue estimates by \$130 million. The major items were lower business tax revenues of \$79 million because of the new federal economic stimulus package, a loss of \$44 million in assumed State General Fund (SGF) interest earnings because of lower interest rates and increased transfers to the Bioscience Authority of \$36 million. The Kansas Legislative Research Department memo states that “One factor influencing the FY 2009 growth rate relates to several pieces of legislation enacted in 2005-07 that will reduce, relative to prior law, the amount of severance (oil and natural gas), income, estate, corporation franchise and motor carrier property tax receipts deposited into the SGF.” For example, the estate tax receipts dropped from \$55 million in 2007 to a projected \$32 million in 2009 and phases out entirely in 2011.

With these new projections - that must be used by all lawmakers - the ending balance for the SGF drops from \$552 million (9% of SGF) in FY 2008 to \$173 million estimated for FY 2009 (2.7% of SGF) and the ending balance goes negative in FY 2010. The FY 2009 estimate does include a pay plan for state employees but does not include the increase of \$38 million for higher health care costs and social service caseloads (nursing care, regular medical, foster care, welfare caseloads, etc.). The final budget bill known as the Omnibus Bill will have to be developed in light of these changed economic circumstances. There will be very strong legislative pressure to limit any new budgetary enhancements and to shore up the ending balances of the SGF in preparation for further economic uncertainties.

#### **Rural Housing Grants for the Disaster Areas**

**SB 417** creates a new, annual \$4 million rural housing grant program. For the first two years, the grants will only be available for the disaster areas around Greensburg and the flooded areas in southeast Kansas. After two years, these grants will be available to all counties with a population under 60,000 – and can be used to provide housing and housing repairs for low income residents. The Kansas Housing Resources Corporation ([www.kshousingcorp.org](http://www.kshousingcorp.org)) will administer this grant program. Final grant rules and regulations should be adopted by mid-June and the first grant applications accepted by the first of July. Grants can be written for housing or housing infrastructure. The local match is 10% for housing infrastructure and 50% for housing programs. Over 3,000 homes were lost in the tornado and flooding damage.

### **Child Support Payment Update**

The Kansas Payment Center (now operated by J.P. Morgan/Chase) is piloting a debit card – known as the NOW card – for custodial parents that receive their child support payments by check. The first pilot is in the judicial district that covers Coffey, Franklin, Linn and Anderson counties. 1,000 notices were sent to custodial parents in the area and so far 130 have adopted a direct deposit option and 78 have decided to adopt the NOW card. A second pilot project will be tried in Saline and Ottawa counties. By fall, the NOW card will go statewide if the pilots are at all workable. Statewide, the Kansas Payment Center is handling 158,061 transactions a month with 84,781 (54%) going out by check and 73,280 (46%) going out electronically. A total of \$30.2 million is disbursed. SRS is hoping to move the number of electronic transactions from 46% to 80% over the next few years.

### **Kansas Corporation Commission – Potential Impact on Energy Policy**

In the last few days of this legislative session, the Kansas Senate confirmed the Governor's appointments of Thomas Wright and Joe Harkins to the Kansas Corporation Commission. This may well be the most important effort by the Governor to chart a new energy direction for Kansas. In the 1980's, Joe Harkins was the Kansas Secretary of Health and Environment and in that capacity helped craft a water plan for the state of Kansas. Today Kansas has a statewide water plan and a Kansas Water Office to coordinate this effort. Kansas is at a similar fork in the road today in regards to an energy plan. Thomas Wright brings a legal knowledge and computer expertise to streamline the filings electronically at the KCC.

The KCC is on the verge of some very important decisions in regards to energy conservation and the role of utilities in providing such services. By late spring, the KCC will make some key decisions on how utilities will be compensated for energy efficiency investments. After this ratemaking decision is decided, the KCC will start analyzing the best energy programs for Kansas such as air conditioner replacement to smart electric metering to funding comprehensive weatherization services. One challenge is how to coordinate weatherization programs between the electric company (such as Westar that serves 570,000 residential customers) and the natural gas company (such as Kansas Gas Service that serves 660,000 residential customers – many the same as Westar). On a per capita basis, Kansas has been last of all 50 states in having utility-based or governmental energy conservation programs but that is changing before our very own eyes.

### **Holcomb Coal and Energy Legislation**

The battle goes on over the construction of two new coal plants at Holcomb. The Senate did override the Governor's veto of the original Holcomb Bill (**SB 327**) but the House did not have the 84 votes necessary for the override. A new bill was then developed – **SB 148** – and passed by the Senate and House before the first adjournment. The Governor will veto this legislation as well and the House will have the full veto session to override this new veto. Key energy legislation is being held up till the Holcomb bill is approved. Kansas City Power & Light's bill to put energy conservation programs into the companies' rate base is on hold. (KCP&L has not been a strong vocal advocate for the Holcomb plant.) **SB 586** that will force electric customers to pay for a nuclear plant as it is being built is also on hold. (Westar and KCP&L have both said that today nuclear power is too expensive.) **SB 580** that would expand Kansas' weatherization program by drawing more dollars from SRS's energy assistance program (LIHEAP) to assist 3,000 homes has been put on hold. Time will tell if these bills will all die if the Holcomb bill is ultimately blocked.

### **Health Care Legislation**

Conferees from the House and Senate came close to agreeing on a comprehensive health care bill but it stalled at the last minute. Agreement has been reached to expand the state children health insurance program (known in Kansas as HealthWave) from 200% to 250% of the federal poverty line but to accomplish the expansion through the use of purchasing private health insurance as is being done in 12 states. Agreement has been reached to expand Medicaid coverage for pregnant women from 150 to 200% of the federal poverty line. Medicaid now funds 33% of the 38,000 births in Kansas, and with this change, that percentage could increase to almost 50% of the births. Agreement has been reached to increase by \$2.5 million the state's funding for safety net medical clinics. The disagreement came over waiting a year to provide Medicaid to parents who make 50% of the federal poverty line. (For a family of three that is \$8,800/year.) For the complete conference report, check out the Kansas Health Policy Authority 4.7.08 Legislative Pulse at [www.khpa.ks.gov](http://www.khpa.ks.gov).

There will be several SRS budgetary items to be considered in the final Omnibus Bill in the veto session. The good news is that \$2.5 million was added in the regular budget bill to cover childcare caseloads expanding service to 22,500 children. SRS's greatest concern is staffing for child protective services. Because federal policy does not allow federal foster care funding to be used for foster care intake and assessment activities, the demand for state dollars increases. SRS asked for \$9 million but the compromise budget bill only allowed \$6 million with the remainder being reviewed at Omnibus. (In 2006, SRS had 3,656 total positions authorized for the regional and central offices but 638 were kept vacant to make budget. In 2007, SRS lost 193 of these vacant positions because of budget shortfalls not because these positions were not needed.) SRS operates an intake system with 1970's computer programs and asked for \$4.2 million to develop an integrated enrollment system. This new system would be shared with the Kansas Health Policy Authority but must be reviewed at Omnibus.

The funding for the community mental health centers (CMHC's) is in play. Last year, the Legislature gave the CMHC's \$10 million on top of the Governor's \$7 million increase to implement a new managed care mental health care system. The Governor did not recommend continuing the extra \$10 million and now the Legislature has just approved the \$7 million increase from last year but will review \$8.8 million more at Omnibus. \$1.7 million for adoption support caseloads, \$18 million for a new early childhood block grant, \$6 million for home and community based service waivers, \$97,008 for a child protection toll-free line and several other items will all be reviewed and debated at Omnibus. The scramble to fund these priorities will be intense.



2531 Lincoln St  
Emporia, KS 66801