
The VOTER



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF LAWRENCE-DOUGLAS COUNTY, KANSAS

Post Office Box 1072, Lawrence KS 66044-1072

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The League of Women Voters is a non-partisan political organization encouraging the informed and active participation of citizens in government and influencing public policy through education and advocacy.

LWVLDC CALENDAR OF EVENTS

When	Where	What
Tuesday June 16, 2015 7-9:30 PM	Home of Melissa Wick 1408 Stone Meadows Dr. Lawrence, KS 66047 [park on west side of the street]	League Member Social. Come by and chat with the Board, fellow members and guests. Bring a friend if you think he or she may be interested in joining the League. There is no program, this is purely social. Beverages (wine, coffee, soft drinks) will be provided. Please bring a dessert or snack to share. Questions? Call Melissa at 841-4108!
Wednesday June 17, 2015 6:30-8:30 PM	Lawrence Public Library Auditorium 707 Vermont St Lawrence, KS 66044	Lawrence Anti-Trafficking Task Force Forum. The topic is Trafficking: The Modern Day Slavery. As part of our education of members and guests, we encourage everyone to attend. LATTE (Lawrence Anti-Trafficking Taskforce and Education) works with civic groups and has gathered representatives to introduce the topic. The forum will take the place of our June brown bag lunch. All are welcome, so please bring a friend.
Saturday June 20, 2015 2-4 PM	Lawrence Arts Center 940 New Hampshire St.	Celebration of Life for Caroljean "CJ" Brune. It will be an informal gathering of friends, to share reminiscences of this wonderful lady.
Saturday June 20, 2015 7 PM	Community Mercantile Meeting Room 901 Iowa St. Lawrence, KS 66044	Land Use Committee Meeting. Monthly meeting of our long-standing Land Use Committee. All members are welcome to attend.
Monday June 22, 2015 11 AM	Plymouth Congregational Church 925 Vermont St.	Services will be held for Nancy Hambleton. Please see page 5 for details.
Saturday June 27, 2015 1-3 PM	Location TBA	Board Retreat. All members welcome.

When	Where	What
Saturday July 4, 2015 4:30 PM - ?	Buford Watson Park 727 Kentucky St.	City of Lawrence annual Fireworks Display & Party in the Park. We will have a voter registration and information table. If you are interested in helping, please contact Cille King.
Thursday July 9, 2015 7-9 PM	Lawrence Public Library Meeting Room A (downstairs) 707 Vermont St Lawrence, KS 66044	LWVLDC Board meeting. Regular meeting of the LWVLDC Board of Directors. Guests who wish to discuss an issue with the Board should contact one of the co-presidents before the meeting.
Saturday July 11, 2015 12 PM (Noon)	m.stoor@yahoo.com	Deadline to submit articles for the July LWVLDC VOTER.

LWVLDC OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

Debra Duncan (President), Cille King (Vice President), Jeanne Mann (Secretary), Marjorie Cole (Treasurer), Margaret Arnold, Janice Friedman, Marci Francisco, Midge Grinstead, Carol Klinknett, Marlene Merrill, Marlaine Stoor, Austin Turney, Melissa Wick.

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE by Debra Duncan

What an exciting and informative month it has been! We started out with an excellent Brown Bag meeting on Jails and Mental Health, presented by Douglas County Administrator Craig Weinaug, <https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=pR4FTJDafb4&feature=youtu.be>, then had an enlightening legislative and budget update by Paul Johnson. Senator Marci Francisco, Representative Boog Highberger and Representative Barbara Ballard were there to answer questions as well. For a program overview and a link to the video, see page 3. Finally, over the last two weeks we watched as our legislature went through a lengthy and contentious process to fill a \$400 million gap in funding for the next fiscal year, which begins July 1, 2015. For a look at the plan, follow this link: <http://www2.ljworld.com/news/2015/jun/13/kansas-lawmakers-tax-plan-makes-numerous-policy-ch/>. The legislative session lasted 113 days, the longest in Kansas history.

DID YOU KNOW?

On Friday, May 22, 2015, Ireland became the first country in the world to legalize gay marriage by popular vote. The referendum vote to change the constitution was approved by 62% of voters.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS by Margaret Arnold

Please welcome Daniel J. Dannenberg, Janis Pool, and honorary member Ann Mah. Dan has been attending League meetings and is interested in government transparency. Janis learned about the League from CJ Brune, and is interested in voter registration and researching issues. Ann belongs to the Topeka League but has written to us, so we hope to see her at some gatherings in the future. She is a former State Representative.

LEAGUE MEMBERS SPEAK OUT! By Marjorie Cole

Opinions our members expressed recently in the Lawrence Journal World include: Letter to the Editor from John Wilson: "Gun Responsibility" March 11, 2015; Letter to the Editor from Maggie Carttar: "Correct Course" April 14, 2015; Letter to the Editor from Rita and Joe Spradlin: "School Access" May 5, 2015; and Letter to the Editor from Lynne Bodle: "Fitting Tribute" May 28, 2015.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE WITH PAUL JOHNSON by Cille King

Paul Johnson has been the Kansas League's legislative liaison for five years, giving us the legislative E-reports weekly during the session and has spoken to the league at conventions and league days in Topeka. When he suggested that he do a "Legislative Wrap-up" for the Lawrence League, we thought the June 3 date would give ample time after the legislative session finished. Who knew that this would be the longest session in the history of the state? So, instead of a "wrap-up", we had a very informative "update".

Paul started with the Kansas budget, noting that between 1960 – 2000, there were only two years with less revenue (at about 1%) than the year before. In 2002, under Governor Sebelius, revenue dropped 7%. The Great Recession in 2008, 2009 and 2010 saw reductions that drew down agencies' ending balances. But, Governor Brownback's tax cuts caused an unprecedented revenue drop of 10% in 2014. The loss of state revenue has meant that the state has underfunded local units of governments, cut contributions to KPERs, underfunded agencies so that they have to leave positions unfilled, and cut funding to K-12 education from \$4300 to \$3850 per student.

Governor Brownback signed into law a judicial budgeting bill containing a non-severability clause that strips the judiciary of its entire budget if the Kansas court finds unconstitutional any part of HB 2338. Chief Judge Larry Solomon challenges the 2014 law, arguing that it violates the separation of powers and should be struck down.

300,000 to 350,000 Kansans are without health insurance. About half of those would be covered if Kansas expanded Medicaid. Because Kansas hasn't expanded Medicaid, hospitals are getting less money, especially for mental health.

In 2011, 37,000 low-income women and children were helped with funding. Those numbers are now down to 14,000, due to stricter guidelines. Kansas has a record number of children in foster care, and childcare slots have been reduced from 19,000 in 2011, to 11,000 in 2015.

Kansas Renewable Energy Portfolio, which helped build 20 wind farms and produce 2000 MV of energy, has been replaced with a voluntary law. Westar is seeking a much greater rate increase for owner's installed solar power. Meanwhile, Kansas ranks 45th in the U.S. for energy policy for efficiency or programs.

Kansas State Water Plan has not been funded for the last four years due to lower revenue. Kansas currently has 35,000 water rights that are not sustainable. Municipal water supplies are lowered as reservoirs silt in. Governor Brownback has approved \$20 million for dredging John Redmond Resourcing, as it supplies the cooling water for Wolf Creek Nuclear Plant.

The state has lost 90% of its hog and dairy farms. Greeley County (a drought stricken area) is the only county to approve an industrial hog farm, with 300,000 hogs. Kansas grows only 4% of the fruits and vegetables that Kansans eat. And only 10% of Kansans eat the recommended amount. The Kansas economy and citizens health would benefit from programs to increase local fruit and vegetable production.

Local elections have been moved from spring to the fall of odd numbered years – giving the current crop of city commissioners and school board members a longer term. Secretary of State Kris Kobach has been given an unprecedented ability to prosecute voting fraud, making his the only position in the U.S. with that power.

This is a brief summary. You can watch the full program, including the comments from Senator Marci Francisco, Representatives Barbara Ballard and Boog Highberger, starting after 46 minutes. Click on the link: Talk & Q&A :<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nOUvgYHcjhE>

CRAIG WEINAUG by Ann Carlin Ozegovic

Craig Weinaug, Douglas County Administrator, spoke on issues of jail overcrowding and mental health at the LWV Brown Bag Luncheon May 20 at the Watkins Museum. He explained that the state of Kansas once provided 800-900 beds for mental health patients. Now that number has been reduced to only 200 beds. Weinaug also explained that while \$900,000 annually has been cut from the Bert Nash Community Health Center, Douglas County's support for Bert Nash has increased more per capita than any other county.

Weinaug gave a brief description of the Douglas County Jail, which was built in 1999. Four existing pods make up the jail for (1) special handling inmates; (2) medium security; (3) work release; and (4) female inmates. The women's pod has 24 beds and once had an average of 9 or 10 inmates. Now there are 24, with nine more being housed in other counties. While the ideal plan would be to not have to add any beds at all, Weinaug explained that the need is for an additional intake pod that would focus on the 20% of inmates with severe mental illness (SMI). Many of these inmates would be diverted to mental health facilities if they were available.

Weinaug spoke about the Lawrence community's efforts on the challenges of creating a crisis intervention center, working with Lawrence Memorial Hospital and Bert Nash Community Health

Center. "We need to paint a vision of what we want, what we can do to make changes, and identify what's possible. This will not be cheap and we would need to have a vote to raise taxes." There will be a hearing the last Monday in June at the Douglas County Court House.

During the Q & A, Bill Simon spoke about his decades-long battle with mental illness. He praised LMH's former 19-bed psych unit for saving his life and said what is planned for the new jail pod is woefully inadequate to help with the mental health problems of inmates. "It's a moral crime, the lack of treatment for mental illness," he said.

Other concerns raised included the disproportional incarceration rate of Native Americans and Blacks; the fact that judges have no flexibility on sentencing; and that it will take two years for all officers to receive the required Crisis Intervention Training.

IN MEMORIAM

Nancy Hambleton, an active League member in the 1950's, died June 7, 2015. She held a B.S. in chemistry from Dickinson College in Pennsylvania. She worked as a chemist with the Kansas Geological Survey from 1947 to 1950. From 1970 to 1975, she served as Lawrence's first female city commissioner and became the first female Lawrence mayor. During her tenure, Massachusetts Street was renovated, Carnegie Library became the Lawrence Arts Center, and sidewalks were added to residential areas. Later, boards she served on included the Lawrence Memorial Hospital Endowment, the KU Anthropology Museum Friends, and the KU Retirees Club. She was the first president of the Lawrence Community Theatre and received many awards for her civic involvements. Services will be held **Monday, June 22**, at Plymouth Congregational Church.

DID YOU KNOW?

REUTERS 3/16/2015 -- Sweeping first-in-the nation legislation making voter registration automatic in Oregon was signed into law by Governor Kate Brown, potentially adding 300,000 new voters to state rolls. The so-called Motor Voter legislation will use state Department of Motor Vehicles data to automatically register eligible voters whose information is contained in the DMV system, with a 21-day opt-out period for those who wish to be taken off the registry.

LAND USE COMMITTEE by Alan Black

The Land Use Committee met on May 16 at the Community Mercantile store. We discussed items on the agenda of the Planning Commission meeting on May 18. We decided not to write any letters. Following are the cases considered at the Commission meeting:

Conditional Use Permit for a micro-distillery at 1743 N. 200 Road. This is located just south of Baldwin on an approximately 20 acre farm. **OUTCOME:** The Commission recommended approval.

Conditional Use Permit for Flory Dairy Equipment at Vinland School, located on approximately 3.9 acres at 702 E. 1747 Road, Baldwin. **OUTCOME:** This case was deferred at the applicant's request.

Preliminary plat for The Reserve at Alvamar #4, located at 1733 Bob White Drive. **OUTCOME:** The Commission recommended approval.

Minor Subdivision Variance for Bella Serra at The Preserve, 4500 Bob Billings Parkway. This would allow a 100 foot right-of-way on Bob Billings Parkway instead of the Code requirement of 150 feet. OUTCOME: The Commission approved the variance.

LAWRENCE PEDESTRIAN COALITION by Alan Black

Much of the group's meeting on June 10 concerned the Safe Routes to School program. Information was given by Charlie Bryan of the Lawrence-Douglas County Health Department and Denise Johnson of the School District. These two organizations are carrying out the program with funding from a State grant.

The goal is to have more pupils walk and bike to school, instead of being driven by a parent. Actions will be focused on a single school as an example of what can be done throughout the District. The Central Middle School on Massachusetts Street has been chosen for this.

There are school crossing guards, who are City employees, at some intersections. The consensus was that there should be guards at the locations used by the most students.

The City Commission has appointed a Pedestrian-Bicycle Issues Task Force, as proposed by the Coalition. There are 11 members, several of whom have been active in the Coalition. The first meeting of the Task Force will be on **June 29**.

The Coalition's next meeting will be on **July 8** at 7:00 p.m. at the Carnegie Building on Vermont Street.

LWV KANSAS BOARD REPORT by Cille King

The newly elected Kansas state board met for the first time on May 30, 2015 at the Topeka office. Co-Presidents Marge Ahrens (Topeka) and Carole Neal (Wichita) had prepared a full 5-hour agenda.

Highlights of the meeting included a decision to keep the current Topeka office (for now) and to hire a part-time office administrator. This person would facilitate league communication: web sites, social media, e-newsletter; review and editing of material. This person would also support the LWVKS and LWVKSEF boards, voter services, member and public education programs and events. The LWVK had a part-time staff person until about 2 1/2 years ago and the support has been missed. The state board also approved purchasing new computer equipment.

In keeping with the evolving social media revolution, the board decided to send out weekly blogs to the local league presidents (for them to forward to their members), instead of reinstating the hard copy quarterly mailings.

The new state study on Education – Financing K-12 in Kansas – has a chair, Cindy Neighbor (Johnson County) and several members who have volunteered to participate.

A group is forming to write Voter Legislation for the 2016 legislative session. Another group is forming to address the list of 33,800 suspended voters in Kansas. This will be an ambitious attempt to enlist the assistance of young people throughout the state. Lawrence should continue to do what we can in getting voters fully registered.

Our co-presidents will be attending the LWVUS Council in Washington, D.C. from **June 18 – 21, 2015**. There will be a Membership/Leadership/Development (MLD) training in Topeka in August for those interested. We hope several members take advantage of this offer. Mark your calendars for a League day in Topeka on **October 24, 2015**.

DOUGLAS COUNTY ELECTED OFFICIALS CONTACT LINK:

<http://www.douglascountyks.org/depts/voting-and-elections/elected-officials-of-douglas-county>

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