

The Kansas Voter

August 2006



League of Women Voters of Kansas

Working together...for Kansas

New Voting Systems for All Kansas Voters

■ Making Voting

History

With the 2006 elections upon us, there are several articles in this issue pertaining to voting. I hope you find them useful.

by Don Merriman, Saline County Clerk and County Election Officer, LWV-Salina member

On August 1, 2006, voting history will be made in the State of Kansas in the way voters are able to cast ballots and in the way the votes are counted. The Help America Vote Act was signed into law on October 29, 2002, by President Bush and changed forever the way elections are conducted in the United States as a result of the 2000 Presidential Election in Florida. The law created an Elections Assistance Commission of four members and a Standards Board, on which I serve along with Secretary of State Ron Thornburgh, and a Board of Advisors. The Commission and Boards meet to help define and carry out the Help America Vote Act guidelines.

As part of the HAVA, new voting equipment must be deployed this year and was funded with approximately \$12,000,000 of federal monies for the State of Kansas. Each County election officer had a choice of 5 vendors for the equipment. Several counties had vendor fairs where they opened the demonstration to the public and asked attendees for their

opinion. The vendors were Diebold, Election Systems & Software, Voting Technologies International, Microvote, and Amcad. Various Kansas Counties chose ES&S with touch screen units and automated paper ballot marking units, VTI, and Diebold. In order to fully implement, all counties have had to use county mill levy money to pay for additional equipment and training. It has been a daunting task to train staff and board workers, and to try to inform as many voters as possible about the new voting equipment as well as implement the equipment in the various polling places. Of course security is of the utmost concern at any election.

With security in mind, election results will not be transmitted electronically in any county. The voting machines will only be connected to power outlets (120V). The units have battery power and will be charged prior to the election. All ballots and electronic devices will be carried to the County Election office by Supervising Judges of the election for counting after the polls close. **3**



Touchscreen voting will be a big change for most Kansans.

■ What are your rights and responsibilities as a Kansas voter?

These Rights and Responsibilities are listed on www.ksvote.org, from the Kansas Secretary of State. You might want to give this to others to take with them to the polls.

Rights

As a Kansas elector, you have the right to:

- Ask questions;
- Request a ballot if you are: a United States citizen, 18 years or older, a Kansas resident, and registered to vote;
- Vote a provisional ballot if your name is not on the voter registration list or if there is another question about your qualifications to vote;
- Vote in an accessible voting place, and request assistance if needed;
- Review a sample ballot before voting;
- Mark your ballot privately and free from coercion or intimidation;
- Receive instructions on how to contact the appropriate officials if these rights are alleged to have been violated;
- Receive a ballot if you are in line at the time the polls close;

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Health Care: Yours, Mine, and Theirs

(part 1 appeared in the March 2006 Kansas Voter)

by Lougene Marsh, Director
Flint Hills Community Health Center

Clearly, a multi-faceted problem will require multi-faceted approaches. Some of these approaches are being tried in states and communities across the country, some are very narrowly targeted, and many are young enough in their development that success is not yet determined.

Targeted approaches include:

- Controlling health care costs by influencing the amount of health care services we use, the types of services we use, or the price of those services.

The recent push for Health Care Savings Accounts (HSA) is one example of promoting more “consumerism” health care spending. However, a recent study by the Commonwealth Fund found that HSAs often resulted in delay or foregoing of recommended care and feeling less satisfied with coverage. In

a recent article in the *Kansas City Star*, columnist Diane Stafford wrote that although three million Americans currently have HSAs, they are not for low-wage earners or those who need expensive care and that they are beyond the “self-management means” of many Americans.

- Strengthening the primary care safety net (in 2004, safety net clinics served 120,562 individuals of which 58% were uninsured; this would equal about 26% of the state’s uninsured—data from Kansas Association of the Medically Underserved.) Capacity is definitely an issue but safety net clinics are about primary care and are not able to provide specialty services nor inpatient care.



- Insurance options for small employers, such as Kansas Business Health Partnership, to provide an insurance product for small employers (<50) with low-income workers (<200% of federal poverty level; FPL).
- H.B.2675 introduced this session to establish a pilot project to allow small employers to utilize the state employees’ health insurance plan (note: this bill did not have a committee hearing)
- Disease Management Initiatives
- Project Access in Wichita

Through the community meetings held by the Citizens Health Care Working Group, a consensus may emerge. The community meetings addressed broad, sweeping issues. Top picks (the answers listed reflect the thinking of those attending the health care forum in Kansas City, MO, hosted by the Citizens Health Care Working Group):

What health care benefits and services should be provided?

- Prescription drugs
- Annual physicals and preventive care
- Hospital stays

A little farther down the list continuing lack of recognition of the integration of health care

- Mental health Care
- Dental care

How should health care coverage be financed?

Should everyone who can afford to do so be required to obtain basic health insurance?

- Yes 60%
- No 40%

Should some people be responsible for paying more than others?

- Yes 72%
- No 28%

Should public policy continue to encourage employer-based health insurance?

- Yes 36%
- No 64%

Do you think government resources should subsidize health insurance for those who can’t afford it?

- Yes 95%
- No 5%

What tradeoffs are the American public willing to make in either benefits or financing to ensure access to affordable, high quality health care coverage and services? What are you and I willing to give up or provide for “their” health care? Do we truly believe that access to high quality health care is a right for all?

Do we have the political will and the courage to promote public policy that tackles the three issues driving our health care system, cost, quality and access?

In Kansas our recently formed Health Policy Authority is actually a strategy to consolidate purchasing power and it is developing a plan to address these issues. Its recent report to the legislature included the following points:

- Support for the safety net in Kansas
- Data management system to drive health policy
- Conduct town hall meetings for public input
- Independent study on state’s health economy
- Comprehensive Medicaid reform study
- Decrease tobacco consumption
- Increase affordability of employer insurance

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Voter Rights and Responsibilities, *continued*

- Obtain up to two replacement ballots if yours is mismarked or spoiled;
- Occupy the voting booth up to five minutes if others are waiting; and
- Have your ballot count if it is cast legally and timely.

Responsibilities

As a Kansas elector, you have the responsibility to:

- Register to vote at least 15 days before the election;
- Provide identification if you are a first-time voter in the county and have not already provided identification;
- Respect the privacy and voting rights of others;
- Read and follow instructions;
- Follow all federal and state voting laws;
- Follow voting procedures established by the county election officer and precinct election board workers;
- Report illegal activities such as electioneering, denial of voting rights, bribery, fraud, misrepresentation or other alleged election crimes to the precinct election board, the county election officer or the secretary of state;
- Review your ballot before casting it to ensure it is complete and correct;
- Treat election workers and other voters with courtesy and respect;
- Be informed about the candidates and issues on the ballot; and
- Keep your voter registration and address records current in the county election office. **3**

■New LWVUS Position on Electronic Voting Systems

The following position was adopted: that the Citizens' Right to Vote be interpreted to affirm that LWVUS supports only voting systems that are designed so that:

1. they employ a voter-verifiable paper ballot or other paper record, said paper being the official record of the voter's intent; and
2. the voter can verify, either by eye or with the aid of suitable devices for those who have impaired vision, that the paper ballot/record accurately reflects his or her intent; and
3. such verification takes place while the voter is still in the process of voting; and
4. the paper ballot/record is used for audits and recounts; and
5. the vote totals can be verified by an independent hand count of the paper ballot/record; and
6. routine audits of the paper ballot/record in randomly selected precincts can be conducted in every election, and the results published by the jurisdiction.

The Manhattan League has undertaken some in-depth studies on electronic voting machines. I urge you to visit their website: http://lwv.manhattank.org/lwv_dre.html. They also suggest as the very best authoritative resource, see the Brennan Center Report (a PDF download) located at: <http://www.brennancenter.org/programs/downloads/Full%20Report.pdf>. **3**

Health Care, *continued*

As consumers and payers of health care, each of us has a huge stake in the public discussion around these issues and the policy outcomes that result. I know that the membership of the League of Women Voters will engage in the debate and be influential in the final outcomes. Together we can create a better future for health care in Kansas and in this country—truly something that will be "Our" health care system, providing quality, affordable health care for all. **3**

Thanks for Your Support of LWVK

So many of you responded to our request for financial support of LWVK's operations, our Education Fund and our Endowment Fund. And as usual, you came through! The Board is very appreciative of your commitment.

Our thanks are extended to:

Ann and Jack Havenhill, Nancy Kindling, John and Joan Strickler, Gwen Elliott, Joy Schell, Gaye Badeker, Eleanor Lowe, Deloris Bell, Beth Prielipp, Robert Lichtwardt, Karin Winn, Ruth Wilkin, Ann Gregg, Donuta Larson, Marilyn Bradt, Linda R. Johnson, Susie Aber, Bob and Jan Kruh, Carol Snyder, Tony Taylor, Ruth Weir, Ralph and Helen Rosenblad, Mary King, Elnora Hazelrigg, Mary Frances Hogg, Jean Hiersteiner, Elizabeth Litfin, Ruth Iliff, Robert Fluker, Susie Forker, Janis McMillen, Larry Wilson, Susan Himes, Penny Seavertson, Kay Hale, Janet Drees, William and Margaret Arnold, Marilyn Chamaberlin, Dolores Furtado, Jerri Pennington, Ross and Marianna Beach, Carmen Wilson, Beverly Komarek, Cassi Neff, Maxine Longstaff, Janet Roth, Phoebe Samelson, Ellen Laner, Betsy Rohleder, Kara Belew, Mary Miller, Carol Sader, Donna Lauffer, JoAnn Myers, Marian Warriner, Bradley and Elizabeth Applebaum, Emma and Pat Doherty, Kathy Tidwell, marci francisco, Lyndal Nyberg, Ray Urquhart, Barbara Rees, Roberta Eveslage, Georgia Sandlin, Burritt Lacy, Jr., Pat Martin, and Jan Durrett. **3**

IN MEMORIAM: Ann Austin Hebberger

by Barbara Buehler and Wanda Brussell, LWV - Johnson County

Ann Hebberger, former State League President (1987-1989) and former Johnson County League President (1991-1992), died on May 28 after a lengthy illness. Ann had been a resident of Mission Springs Assisted Living Center since last fall after suffering a severe stroke. She received both physical and speech therapy during the winter and spring.

Ann also served as a lobbyist for the Kansas League on justice issues, especially on behalf of juvenile justice legislation. Ann was a member of the Johnson County Juvenile Corrections and Advisory Board. She received the United Community Services Citizen of the Year Award in 2003, citing her body of work to enhance human services in Johnson County.

Ann was a joy to work with on any project. Her energy and curiosity, combined with a positive temperament just caused things to happen. She made many friends throughout the state in her legislative and volunteer work. There was no one else quite like Ann; she was indeed one of a kind.

Ann was 77 years old. She is survived by her husband, Bill, two daughters, a son, and three grandchildren. Condolence messages may be sent to Bill and the family, at this address: Mission Springs Assisted Living, 5300 W. 61st Place, #303, Mission, KS 66205. **3**

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has." — Margaret Mead.

Ann Hebberger was a thoughtful and committed citizen who never stopped trying to change the world—and who left it a better place.

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