

**LEGISLATIVE E-REPORT
LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF KANSAS**

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2012 LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF KANSAS E-REPORT #11

March 9, 2012

By Paul Johnson, Bob Harder and others for LWVK

BEWARE, THE IDES OF MARCH

VOTER REGISTRATION/SUPPRESSION BILL—HEARING THURS. MAR. 15.

House Bill 2437 will receive a hearing in the Ethics and Elections Committee on **Thursday March 15th, 9:30 AM in room 159-S** in the Capitol which is located at 900 SW Jackson This is Mr. Kobach's bill to push forward to June 15 the PROOF OF CITIZENSHIP piece of his voter law changes (Currently this is set to go into effect Jan. 1, 2013.)

Volunteer groups like **the League** with its decades long history of voter registration **will no longer be able to register voters.**, including tabling at community gatherings, registering the elderly and disabled at care homes, students at high schools and college, etc.

Public voter registration can not take place since the registration would not be complete or legal with out a required COPY OF THE BIRTH CERTIFICATE sent to the election office with the registration application. No volunteer group can do that with personal documents like a birth certificate and people will not be likely to have one in their pocket anyway. Voter registration and voting for all Kansans will be more difficult with the greatest challenges to low income Kansans, women (who must pay for and show proof of name change), and the elderly.

The committee does have members that think the administrative failures of voter ID at the DMV, free birth certificates at the Bureau of Vital Statistics, KDHE, and the voting booths indicate that our state is not ready more restrictions. Rushing in to more stringent voting restrictions will distract officials from correcting the existing problems and invite additional complications.

**1. Contact your senator if he/she is on the Ethics and Elections Committee
-- Call 800-432-3924 or email:**

- o Senator Terrie Huntington, Fairway/Jo Co. area.
Terrie.Huntington@senate.ks.gov
- o Senator Vickie Schmidt, Topeka area. Vicki.Schmidt@senate.ks.gov
- o Senator Oletha Faust-Goudeau, Wichita area, Oletha.Faust-Goudeau@senate.ks.gov
- o Senator Pat Apple, Louisburg area, Pat.Apple@senate.ks.gov
- o Senator Pete Brungardt, Salina area, Pete.Brungardt@senate.ks.gov
- o Senator Dick Kelsey, Goddard area, Dick.Kelsey@senate.ks.gov
- o Senator Kelly Kultala, Kansas City area, Kelly.Kultala@senate.ks.gov
- o Senator Mike Petersen, Wichita area, Mike.Petersen@senate.ks.gov
- o Senator Roger Reitz, Manhattan area, Roger.Reitz@senate.ks.gov

2. Testify or come support the LWVK testimony

Each of you can sign up to testify in person: Thursday at 9:30 am in room 159-S in the Capitol Bldg which is located at 900 SW Jackson St, Topeka, KS. (Enter under the steps on the east) Contact Ellen Martinez, assistant to the Ethics and Elections Committee at 785-296-8621 and request time to speak. She will ask that you submit 30 copies of your (3 minute) testimony to her by noon the day before the hearing. Her email address is ellen.martinez@senate.ks.gov. Representative Ann Mah of Topeka has offered to print copies of our testimonies and deliver them to Ms. Martinez. Send your testimonies to be copied at ann.mah@house.ks.gov by 5:00, TUESDAY. If you cannot attend the hearing you can submit written testimony. Email your written testimony to Ellen Martinez at ellen.martinez@senate.ks.gov requesting that it be included in Thursday's hearing.

3. Spread the Word

Invite your friends to sign this online petition that KanVote is sponsoring. http://signon.org/sign/prevent-the-rushed-implement?source=s.em.cr&r_by=1927109&mailing_id=2562 On FaceBook "friend" the Kansas Voter Coalition and KanVote - oh, at the League of Women Voters of Kansas

BEWARE the IDES OF MARCH (2)

Senate Ways and Means Comm. will be holding hearings on **SB 433**, the **Appropriations Bill** for FY 2012, 2013, & 2014 **on Thurs. March 15th at 10:30am**. Possible final action will be Friday, **March 16th**. The full detail is on the Calendar for the week of March 12-16.

THE BIG GAMBLE ON TAXES -- AND SPENDING CUTS

ELIMINATION OF INCOME TAX? SUB. for SB 177
Kansas Governor Tax Proposal: Wealthy Kansans Pay Less, Poor and Middle-Income Kansans Pay More

The debate on the Kansas House floor will start shortly after **11am on Monday March 12** on this important bill. You can listen to this debate over the internet by going to this website: <http://www.kslegislature.org/li/> and clicking on Live Audio Broadcast/House.

The Kansas Legislative Hotline **800-432-3924** is available for you to leave a message for your Kansas House member.

House Sub. for SB 177 The Kansas House of Representatives **floor debate** will begin on Monday (3/12) to fundamentally change tax policy in Kansas. The Kansas House Taxation committee has passed House Substitute for Senate Bill 177. House Sub. for SB 177 would:

- direct the Secretary of Revenue to **start reducing** individual income taxes **when growth in state income tax revenues** and privilege and excise taxes **exceeds 2%** from the previous year starting in 2012.
- the three individual income tax brackets would be retained but
- the middle bracket would be reduced the quickest.

- This process would **continue until all individual income taxes are eliminated** and
- then onward to phased out by 2018 the corporate income tax, **tax on non-wage business income** for LLC's, Subchapter S Corporations and sole proprietorships.

This bill will eventually eliminate the individual and corporate income tax in Kansas over several years. **The existing balanced tax system of property, sales and income tax will give way to complete reliance on just the sales and property tax while downsizing public education and the social safety net.** Under Brownback's tax plan from 2013 to 2017, **State General Fund receipts will be reduced** by \$1.11 Billion in income taxes while sales taxes increase by \$250 million.

- \$300 million of promised Highway funding is diverted to make the numbers work for this bill. The severance tax exemption on new oil wells producing over 250 barrels a day would be repealed
- The Ks. earned income tax credit for working poor in Ks in 2014 is reduced by more than half: from 17% to 9% of the filers' federal earned income tax credit.
- (Note: in 2010 – 191,000 Kansas filers received a state average EITC payment of \$357.) Actually in 2013, the EITC, the **food sales tax rebates, employer child day care assistance** and **several other refundable tax credits would become non-refundable** so the aforementioned EITC refund check of \$357 **would be eliminated**. These two provisions on the EITC and the elimination of refundable credits make this bill very regressive by increasing taxes for the lowest income households. There may be some amendments on the House floor to lessen the regressive nature of this bill.

There are many challenges for this bill to pass. **\$300 million of promised Highway funding is diverted to make the numbers work** for this bill. The severance tax exemption on new oil wells producing over 250 barrels a day would be repealed and certain out of state oil drillers are opposing this change.

NOTE: With all revenues over 2% dedicated to income tax reductions, funding will not be available for other vital needs such as social services or education. Over the last several years of budget cuts, millions have been diverted from the Highway program and with the 2% cap these funds would never be repaid to the Highway plan.

EARNED INCOME TAX CREDIT STILL THREATENED

The House is scheduled to debate its tax proposal on Monday March 12, and the Senate is scheduled to revisit the governor's tax proposal and Sen. Jeff King's bill - both of which would be devastating to the EITC. KS ACTION FOR CHILDREN will testify against Sen. King's bill, SB 445, on Wednesday. This bill would make the EITC non-refundable and eliminate the Homestead Program for renters while increasing the Homestead Program for homeowners. **This shifts assistance from low-wage working families to homeowners who don't have to count all of their income to qualify.**

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EARLY CHILDHOOD FUNDING

When the tobacco law suit settlement came, the dollars were to go into the Kansas Endowment for Youth (KEY) for the Children's Initiative Fund (CIF). It must be used to provide additional funding for programs to benefit the physical and mental health, welfare, safety and overall well-being of Kansas children. CIF money may not be used to replace or substitute moneys appropriated from the State General Fund (SGF) in the previous year.

Budget committees in the House and Senate continue to work on the 2013 budget. The House Appropriations Committee voted this week to accept the governor's proposal for CIF funding NOW TO BE FULLY WITHIN the SRS budget but added a provision flagging the issue for further review after the tobacco payment is received by the state in April. Similar action was taken in the House Education Budget Committee. The Senate Subcommittee on the SRS budget received testimony from advocates Friday (including Kansas Action for Children) and is expected to make its recommendations early next week.

EXPANSION OF THE K.I.D.S. HIGHER EDUCATION SAVINGS MATCH PROGRAM

Senate Bill 153 would make way for philanthropic organizations to contribute to K.I.D.S. accounts, helping low-income families to save and plan for their children's education. It was re-referred to the Senate Education Committee this week and will receive a public hearing on Monday (3/12).

KANCARE

This week, a bipartisan group of Senators and Representatives introduced a resolution asking for the implementation of KanCare, the proposed Medicaid reform, to be delayed from Jan. 1, 2013, to July 1, 2013, to allow for a closer examination by the Legislature and adequate public input. A hearing will be held in Senate Public Health and Welfare on Thursday, March 15.

KANCARE is the Governor's proposal to privatize into a statewide-managed care plan, Kansas Medicaid, (the healthcare plan for low income Kansans with no insurance). For context,

- the Medicaid program in Kansas serves over 350,000 residents now. It is the largest child insurance program in Kansas.
- Medicaid funding is **split 60% federal dollars and 40% state dollars**.
- The Medicaid budget this year is \$2.8 Billion.
- It funds 40% of the annual 38,000 births in Kansas.
- It funds about one-half of all nursing home beds in Kansas.
- The Governor will have to receive special waivers from the United States Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to start KanCare.

The Governor's has requested a 'global waiver' that **would halt future increases in federal Medicaid spending in Kansas while freeing Kansas from federal Medicaid rules.** The Governor's spending forecast is that with statewide managed care Medicaid plans for the elderly and disabled starting January 1, 2013, Kansas can save at least \$850 million over five years. HHS Secretary and former Kansas Governor Kathleen Sebelius is under no federal law or regulation to consider this waiver request in six months or less. Florida submitted a similar waiver request on Aug. 1, 2011 but that waiver has not been accepted in total. Kansas has to first finish negotiations with the managed care companies before Kansas can finalize its waiver request to HHS.

LEGISLATIVE PETITION TO BROWNBACK: DELAY MEDICAID MOVE TO PRIVATIZED KANCARE. Since the governor can do an executive order to reorganize within the executive branch, it can be stopped or reversed only if the legislature acts to say "hold it" within 60 days. A resolution urging the Governor to delay by six months (January 1, 2013 to July 1, 2013) the start of his Medicaid plan has been introduced in the Kansas Senate. There are 22 Senators and 40-50 House members who are supporting this resolution. There are many uncertainties. Five managed care companies have bid on KanCare and three of them will be selected this fall. Similar reform efforts in other states have been chaotic. If there are problems with these new managed care plans, the State lawmakers will get the first call. State lawmakers are debating how to design an oversight role the Kansas Legislature can play over KanCare. For complete coverage of the KanCare debate, visit the Kansas Health Institute website at: <http://www.khi.org/>

REDISTRICTING UPDATE

The redistricting debate in Kansas over legislative, congressional and State Board of Education districts continues on. The Kansas Senate has passed a Congressional map (SB 344) but the Kansas House is considering several different versions. **On Monday, Mar.12,** the Kansas House Redistricting committee will **start voting on a Congressional map that will be different from the Senate's map.** There is a website that lists the various proposed maps. It also gives you committee and census information. <http://redistricting.ks.gov/Plans/plans.html>

HOUSE BILL 2662 – LANDFILL RESTRICTIONS **C. Elaine Giessel - Testimony** **League of Women Voters of Johnson County**

"The key issue with regard to HB 2662 appears to be restrictions placed on privately owned landfills by the county in which the landfill is located. Whether privately owned or not, a landfill is part of a complete solid waste management program, which the counties are required to develop on behalf of their citizens. A private landfill owner provides waste disposal for a profit. The community views the landfill operation as a public utility service."

"A landfill becomes a community resource. Still, the owner's franchise to operate depends upon the support and trust of the local citizens. Once a landfill has been created, it is clearly in the interest of the host community to conserve landfill space as much as possible for its own future use. Communities should be able to have some control over the operation of the landfill, so it can be utilized as long and as safely as possible."

“There are long-term community benefits when resources, energy and landfill space are conserved, recycling is encouraged and disposal costs held down. HB 2662 threatens to remove from counties some of the options that local communities need to manage wastes effectively and economically, now and in the future.”

“For this reason, the League of Women Voters is opposed to passage of the bill.”

RURAL OPPORTUNITY ZONE PROGRAM (ROZ) REPORT

This program passed in 2011. It identified 51 rural counties to provide income **tax breaks for out-of-state persons** who re-locate to these counties.

STUDENT LOAN BUY-DOWN It also provided an opportunity for counties to share with the State in the cost of forgiving up to \$15,000 in student loans over 5 years. Counties had to pass a resolution to start the student loan program and by December 31st - 44 counties had signed on. These 44 counties have pledged a total of \$390,000 for student loans that will be matched by the State.

- This bill increases the number of counties in the Rural Opportunity Zones to 73.
- In these counties, out-of-state taxpayers who relocate pay no income tax
- up to \$15,000 in student loans can be re-paid by county and state dollars.
- 235 applications have been received so far for a total request of \$227,000 in student loan buy downs.
- 54 of these applicants are working in education while
- 46 are working in healthcare.
- 148 have family connections to rural Kansas.
- 80 moved to ROZ counties from out of state.
- The income tax exemptions will start in tax year 2012 and it will be 2014 before good data is available on the cost of the program to Kansas.

CONSERVATION RESERVE PROGRAM (CRP) –

The federal 2008 Farm Bill appropriated \$25 million to provide an incentive for landowners to transfer land from an expiring CRP contract to a beginning or socially disadvantaged farmer or rancher to return the land to production for sustainable grazing or crop production, with additional measures to encourage good conservation. USDA stopped accepting offers on February 24 as the funding had been used up. 1,626 contracts covered 260,523 acres in 26 states. Kansas had 219 contracts. Currently 29.6 million acres are enrolled in CRP. Contracts for 6.5 million CRP acres nationwide are scheduled to expire September 2012 and an additional 3.3 million acres are scheduled to expire in 2013. Congress needs to come up with interim funding to allow this program to continue as so many acres come out of CRP this year and next.

KNOW YOUR FARMER, KNOW YOUR FOOD REPORT

The United States Department of Agriculture released this report to enhance coordination among federal programs that help build local and regional farm & food systems. Along with the report, USDA released an interactive mapping feature called the Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food Compass, which highlights accomplishments of USDA programs and success stories from across the country. This new web-based tool provides a state-by-state display of projects and case

studies. Farm-level value of local food sales totaled about \$4.8 billion in 2008, or about 1.6% of the U.S. market for agricultural products. An estimated 107,000 farms (5% of all farms) are engaged in local food systems.

http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdahome?navid=KYF_COMPASS

The Kansas Legislative Hotline 800-432-3924 is available for you to leave a message for your Legislator.