IN MEMORY

KRC mourns the loss of one of its founding members. Life-long activist and advocate Vaughn Flora, Lawrence, Ks., passed away on March 17 after a long battle with cancer. Vaughn, who wore many hats during his 77 years, was one of KRC’s founding steering committee members in 1979, and was on the first board of directors. Before that he was instrumental in organizing Kansas Organic Producers (now Central Plains Organic Farmers) in the late 1970’s during his organic farming years.

He served on the KRC board from 1980-1997, during KRC’s formative years. If there was a protest, an issue to be championed, or an injustice to be fought, Vaughn was there.

KRC was organized in 1979 as an alternative voice for farmers to address the demise of the family farm, and the loss of political power and economic opportunity in rural communities. Vaughn and that early board found themselves immediately in the midst of the 1980’s farm crisis with its record number of foreclosures and bankruptcies, a time ripe for organizing farmers and their supporters to speak out against corporate consolidation of the food system and resources, and for the rights of borrowers, for building a more diversified agriculture and more local food system, for promoting renewable energy, and conservation and protection of soil and water.

Vaughn’s fingerprints, thoughts, and guidance were all over this early work at KRC, and for years to come. No matter where he found himself, he stayed true to the fundamental questions and struggles surrounding equity, power, and justice.

To the benefit of his friends and neighbors in Topeka and around the state, his political focus took a more mainstream, though never conservative approach, when he was elected to the State House of Representatives for District 57 of East Topeka. He served 14 years.

My favorite piece out of his full obituary was this: “Vaughn’s loyalty and political chutzpah made for some memorable moments in his life. He was proud of his legislative work on farm bills to protect small farmers and his efforts to prevent more coal-powered plants, monitor air pollution, reform health care, and protect Kansas water. His life-long passion for affordable housing led him to build T Town in Topeka, providing housing for the elderly and people with disabilities. He was also not above fighting vermin: at one point, to protect then-Governor Kathleen Sebelius, who was speaking at the Kansas State Fair, Vaughn scuffled with a heckling anti-choice protester dressed as a giant cockroach. Although Vaughn was banned from the state fair for life because of the incident, he had no regrets.”

Vaughn leaves behind his wife Julie, his children and extended family,
It has been said that a great revolutionary is guided by a great feeling of love. I think Vaughn embodied this for his fellow travelers because he leaves behind a legacy as a generous man, always passionate and committed to a better life and world for all. Rest in peace, Vaughn. May we all follow your best examples, learn from your mistakes, and “do the best we can.”

By Mary Fund

Services for Vaughn will be held 1 p.m., Sat., March 26 CST at the Lawrence Jewish Community Congregation, 917 Highland Dr., Lawrence, KS followed by a burial at Oak Hill Cemetery’s Natural Burial area (section 15C). Masks and vaccinations required. You can live-stream the Celebration of Life service at Warren McElwain (https://warrenmcelwain.com/).

Memorial donations may be made to Elara Care Hospice, Kansas Democratic Party, Kansas Organic Producers (Central Plains Organic) , Kansas Rural Center, and Kansas Land Trust – all through Warren McElwain, 120 W. 13th Street, Lawrence, KS 66044.

Full obituary: https://www.cjonline.com/obituaries/p0199768

NEXT WEEK IN THE LEGISLATURE

This week both chambers worked long hours to pass bills to the other chamber to meet the session’s “drop dead” deadline to consider non-exempt bills not in originating chamber. Bills that did not make it through this gauntlet are generally considered dead for the session, although that does not necessarily mean some surprises won’t be attempted.

Next week both chambers return for a long week of conferencing and negotiating agreements between chambers to finalize bills passed as they work toward first adjournment on April 1. Then they will recess until the veto session begins on April 25.

Several big issues, many relating to the state budget including tax issues, food sales tax, paying down state water debt, etc., remain to be settled. Most of the action will be in conference committees and on the floors of both chambers.

Check daily calendars at http://www.kslegislature.org/li/

Floor action can be followed remotely.
For Senate: http://www.kslegislature.org/li/b2021_22/chamber/senate/
For House: http://www.kslegislature.org/li/b2021_22/chamber/house/
CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS UPDATE

This week the Kansas Senate failed to find the necessary 27 votes to pass the constitutional amendment (SCR 1621) to abolish the Kansas Supreme Court Nominating Commission and mandate Senate confirmation for Kansas Supreme Court justices as is the procedure for Kansas Court of Appeals justices (that was established by statute in 2013). Vote was 26-13.

The Kansas Senate also failed to pass a constitutional amendment (SCR 1620) requiring a two-thirds majority votes in the House and Senate to create new taxes or to raise existing taxes. (Vote was 25-14) The House had yet to consider either constitutional amendment and if two-thirds of both chambers had approved these constitutional amendments, they would have been placed on the August 2022 primary ballot and need only a simple majority by Kansas voters to pass.

https://kansasreflector.com/2022/03/24/senate-gop-fails-to-secure-enough-votes-to-pass-anti-tax-constitutional-amendment/

In terms of the ‘supermajority’ constitutional amendment to create new taxes or increase existing taxes, there are 15 states that require a legislative supermajority in both chambers to increase taxes. This requirement varies by state ranging from a two-thirds majority to a three-fifths majority to a three-fourths majority. Seven states require a two-thirds majority: Arizona, California, Florida, Louisiana, Missouri, Nevada and South Dakota. Five states require three-fifths: Delaware, Kentucky, Mississippi, Oregon and Connecticut. Three states require a three-fourths majority: Arkansas, Michigan and Oklahoma.

There will likely be a constitutional amendment (HCR 5022) on the August 2022 primary ballot mandating that counties who now elect county sheriffs will be constitutionally mandated to continue that procedure and it cannot be changed. Since 1974, Riley County (being the only Kansas county) has not had an elected sheriff. This amendment permits Riley County to continue this policy but if it would change to an elected sheriff it could not reverse course.

Sheriffs can be removed by a recall petition election defined by the Kansas Constitution or a writ of quo warranto initiated by the Attorney General. When this amendment passed the Kansas House it would have been on the November 2022 ballot. The Senate changed it to the August ballot so the House will have to vote again on this amended version. It passed the House originally on a 97 to 24 vote. It passed the Senate on a 36 to 2 vote. Johnson County has been contemplating changing certain county offices in terms of elections but this amendment (if passed) blocks a change for the sheriff.

HCR 5014, the constitutional amendment that would allow a vote on changing how the Executive branch and agencies now establish rules and regulations on state programs, passed the Senate (after passing the House) so it will be on the November 2022 ballot.

The resolution shifts responsibility to lawmakers who will now have veto power over rules and regulations. Currently they can do so only by passing another piece of legislation. Some argue that this will make it harder for agencies to do their jobs, and easier for business interests to get rid of what they feel are cumbersome rules and regulations meant to protect Kansas and Kansans. Agencies will still make the rules and regulations but if the amendment passes, lawmakers can undo them more easily, making for an uncertain regulatory climate and allowing business and industry with highly paid lobbyists more power. Read more here:
Also, important to note is that there will be a constitutional amendment on the August 2022 ballot reversing a decision by the Kansas Supreme Court regarding women’s health and reproductive rights. In regular primary elections, a voter has to declare party affiliation to cast a ballot. In this ‘special election’ a voter does **not** have to declare a party affiliation to vote on constitutional amendments.

---

**KANSAS SUPREME COURT NOMINATING COMMISSION: How It Works Now – PART 2**

When there is a vacancy on the Kansas Supreme Court, the nominating commission has 60 days from the date the vacancy occurs to send the names of three qualified nominees to the Governor. After receiving the list of nominees, the Governor has 60 days to appoint one of them to the court. The commission announces when it is accepting nominations, and it releases the names of who is being considered based on the nominations received.

The commission reviews the nominees’ qualifications, conducts public interviews, and decides which three nominees to recommend to the Governor. A nominee for justice must be: at least 30 years old and a lawyer admitted to practice in Kansas who has been engaged in the practice of law for at least 10 years, whether as a lawyer, judge, or full-time teacher at an accredited law school. Justices must retire at age 75 or when they finish the term in which they turn 75.

Nominating commission members include one lawyer and one non-lawyer from each of the state’s four congressional districts, plus a lawyer who chairs the commission. Non-lawyers are appointed by the Governor. Lawyers are elected by other lawyers within their Congressional districts. The chair is elected by lawyers statewide. Terms are four years and members are limited to two terms. When commissioners review nominees for justice, they look at a person’s legal and judicial experience; educational background; character and ethics; temperament; service to the community; impartiality and respect of colleagues.

Justices must follow the law and not be influenced by politics, special interest groups, public opinion, or their own personal beliefs. They take an oath of office that includes swearing to support, protect and defend the U.S. Constitution and Kansas Constitution.

---

**REDISTRICTING PROGRESS**

While the one-party, gerrymandered, veto-overridden Kansas Congressional map is being litigated in both federal and state district courts, there has been bi-partisan progress to pass a Kansas Senate and Kansas House legislative district map. The Senate map passed on a 28-8 bi-partisan vote.


The process left much to be desired for settling on a Senate district map. While there was a rush at the start of the session to pass a Congressional map, a few weeks went by without any proposed Senate or House district map. The Senate Redistricting committee gave scant notice for public hearings and the time for the public to understand and testify on the proposed maps. Partial bi-partisan discussions went on behind closed doors. Certain sponsored non-partisan maps were essentially ignored. The House Redistricting committee had a more open process and more access for public involvement. There was far greater cooperation between the two parties on finding an acceptable compromise that passed the House floor 112 to 9.

The normal protocol is for one chamber not to interfere in the agreed upon map from the other chamber. Next up for the final redistricting map is the 10-district map for the State Board of Education. Each of these 10 districts represents four State Senate districts. To this point, two maps have been proposed – Apple and Little Jerusalem Badlands. These two maps have different sets of Senate districts to comprise a State Board of Education district. (Click on the State Board of Education tab.)


These legislative and State Board of Education district maps are subject to the Governor's approval. If there is a veto, the Legislature could override (as with the Congressional map). If approved by the Governor, the state redistricting bills (maps) are published in the Kansas Register and the Attorney General must petition the Kansas Supreme Court within 15 days of the publication to determine the validity of the redistricting. The Court has 30 days to decide. If found valid, the process has been completed. If found invalid, the Legislature has 15 days to pass new maps. This is the Kansas Constitutional procedure for the state maps but Congressional maps are not mentioned – which is now being litigated in Kansas district courts.

Going forward to redistricting for 2032, the Governor - in cooperation with the Kansas Legislature - should establish a joint public/private redistricting task force to discuss options for creating a non-partisan redistricting commission in Kansas. Some 15 states have established these redistricting commissions by various means such as voter referendums. Kansas can learn from the experiences of these different models and find the best one for Kansas that adhere to the adopted legislative redistricting guidelines of compact districts, communities of interest and public understanding.

Climate Solutions and Justice in the Transitions Online Teach-In
March 30 7 p.m.
Hosted by Kansas State University, Manhattan, Ks.

A World Wide Teach-In on Climate and Justice will be hosted by Kansas State University on Wednesday evening, March 30, starting at 7:00 p.m. This will be a Zoom online event. More details will be sent to those who register.

An introductory video will be provided by Bard College. KSU’s Larry E. Erickson will provide introductory comments. Donna Schenk-Hamlin will be the facilitator. Gerry Snyder will be the Zoom host.

The program will include the following topics:
1. Carbon management with trees in Kansas - Charles Barden
2. Panel on climate justice in Kansas and the Earth Charter - Charles Rice, Moti Rieber, and Keith Mundy
3. Reducing methane emissions in Kansas - Zack Pistora
4. Panel on climate solutions and housing justice combined: workforce solar housing partners - Josh Brewer, William Dorsett, Michael Gibson, and Donna Schenck-Hamlin
5. Energy efficiency in Kansas - Dorothy Barnett and Beth Pauley

To register: https://forms.gle/T3cvn3uExPYRsUDb7

For more information: Contact Larry E. Erickson <lerick@ksu.edu>

Special instructions: Zoom link will be sent later to all participants who register.
LEGISLATIVE DEADLINES

Wednesday, March 23rd (Second Chamber Consideration) Last day to consider non-exempt bills not in originating chamber.

Friday, April 1st (First Adjournment) No bills considered after this date except bills vetoed by governor, omnibus appropriations act and omnibus reconciliations spending limit bill.

Veto session is anticipated to begin on April 25th.

Exempt committees: House and Senate Federal and State Affairs, Senate Ways and Means, Senate Assessment and Taxation, House committees on Calendar and Printing, Appropriations, Taxation or select committees of either house when so authorized.

Contributors to KRC are automatically on the Policy Watch e-list, if they provide an e-mail address. KRC provides Updates to the sponsoring organizations including League of Women Voters of Kansas, Kansas Natural Resource Council, Kansas Farmers Union, Climate and Energy Project, Audubon of Kansas, and Friends of the Kaw, who make the Updates available to their memberships.

If you are receiving KRC Policy Watch through one of these organizations and have questions, contact the organization directly.

If you wish to be removed from the KRC list, contact info@kansasruralcenter.org

For questions about Policy Watch content, contact Paul Johnson at pdjohnson@centurylink.net or Mary Fund at ksrc@rainbowtel.net

Kansas Rural Center | 9350 E Corporate Hills Drive, #781057, Wichita, KS 67278

Unsubscribe info@kansasruralcenter.org

About Constant Contact

Sent by info@kansasruralcenter.org in collaboration with

Constant Contact

Try email marketing for free today!