

The Kansas Voter

February 2009



League of Women Voters of Kansas

Working together...for Kansas

Climate Change Hits Home

■ A Look at the Risks To Kansas

We have all heard the bad news: Global climate change poses a significant threat to our environment, health, and already-beleaguered economy.

However, there is good news as well: Solutions abound – from energy efficiency to renewable energy technologies like wind and solar power!

Also, organizations such as LWV have made addressing climate change a key priority. We at the Climate and Energy Project (CEP) agree that NOW is the time to take action to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions, and tackle climate change head on.

In this issue of *The Voter*, we'll discuss the challenges that climate change presents for Kansas specifically. Next month, we'll discuss the many solutions available to our state and nation – ones that we can begin to implement NOW.

But first, the science. As you know, the effects of climate change will be felt around the globe. It is also projected to have drastically different regional impacts. At CEP, we wanted to know: Exactly what impacts would climate change have on Kansas?

CEP brought its concerns to two University of Kansas scientists – IPCC climatologist Professor

Johannes Feddema and Assistant Professor Nathaniel Brunzell. The results of their study were sobering:

Over the next century, climate change poses significant risks for Kansas – and eastern and western Kansas will be affected in very different ways.

If carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gas emissions continue to increase as projected by the middle of the road IPCC A1B scenario, then by 2100:

HEAT

Temperatures in Kansas will rise in all seasons, in all parts of the state, by an average of 2-4° F.

Southwest Kansas could see a rise as steep as 8° F. Higher summer temperatures will create more heat waves. The number of cooling degree days (the days that people run their air conditioning) will increase by about 50%. Higher summer nighttime temperatures will stress livestock and crops.

Freezing days will decrease during the winter. By 2060, winter temperatures will mostly stay above freezing. The number of heating degree days (the days that people run their heaters) will decrease by about 25%. The lack of hard freezes means that insects and diseases will likely increase.

STORM INTENSITY

The weather will become more variable.

Yearly precipitation totals are projected to stay about the same, but precipitation patterns will shift, becoming less predictable, less frequent, and broken up by longer periods of dry weather.

There will be fewer snow events. Individual rainstorms will become more intense when they occur, likely leading to more flooding.

WATER

Temperatures will rise and evapotranspiration rates will increase, but yearly precipitation will not increase to meet the need for additional water.

Western Kansas will become warmer and drier. Soil moisture will decrease, putting more pressure on irrigation. During the summer, water need (the measure of how much water plants must have to grow) will increase as much as eight inches because of rising temperatures.

Eastern Kansas will become warmer and wetter. However, the higher temperatures will likely more than offset any increases in precipitation, due to the increase in evaporation rates. The result will actually be an overall drying effect. Less water will be available for rivers and reservoirs in winter, and plant stress will increase in summer.

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Climate Change

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Drought patterns are already intensifying across the state. The greatest decrease in winter moisture is taking place in western Kansas. The greatest increase in spring moisture is occurring in eastern Kansas.

Now, take a moment. That's some pretty sobering information. Clearly, if carbon dioxide emissions continue to climb as projected, our state will be a very different place to live and raise our families. However, these are projections, not predictions. The decision is ours: How will we act NOW to protect our state, our neighbors, and our ecosystems from the risks of climate change?

What can you do to reduce greenhouse gas emissions?

Visit www.climateandenergy.org and choose your solutions – saving energy, developing renewables, and working with your elected representatives. 3

This overview summarizes recent research conducted by University of Kansas climate scientists Drs. Nathaniel Brunsell and Johannes Feddema. The full climate study can be found at: <http://www.climateandenergy.org/LearnMore/InTheNews/ClimateStudy.htm>

Eileen Horn is the Director of Community Outreach for the Climate and Energy Project of the Land Institute. The Climate and Energy Project supports lively, informed conversations about our energy future. Our goal is to help halt the Midwest's contributions to global warming and climate change. We support the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by increasing energy efficiency and developing renewable energies in a sustainable manner. www.climateandenergy.org 3

Greenhouse Gas Emissions: Two Approaches

Facing the growing evidence that burning fossil fuels is contributing significantly to global climate change, policymakers are evaluating strategies for reducing U.S. greenhouse gas emissions. They have two general approaches to consider.

Cap-and-Trade

With a cap-and-trade system, policymakers set a limit on the quantity of a pollutant (e.g., CO₂) that can be emitted in a given period. The total emissions allowed under this cap are divided into permits representing the right to emit a given amount (e.g., one ton of CO₂). The permits are then allocated to the sources covered by the program (e.g., power plants). At the end of the compliance period, each source must report all emissions and surrender an equivalent number of permits.

Since the number of permits is limited, they have financial value. Companies able to reduce their emissions at low cost can sell the permits they don't need to companies for whom the cost of reducing emissions is high. Each company has the flexibility to choose how to meet its emissions target, but market incentives encourage them to develop new, cleaner technologies. Over time, the cap is lowered to achieve more aggressive emissions-reduction goals.

Carbon Tax

A carbon tax is imposed on fossil fuel suppliers at a rate that reflects the amount of carbon that will be emitted when the fuel is combusted. The tax is included in the price of the coal, oil, and natural gas supplied to wholesale users and ultimately is passed on to consumers in the price of electricity, gasoline and other energy-intensive products. By

raising the price of carbon-based energy, the tax creates incentives to reduce energy use, stimulates demand for more energy-efficient products, and promotes a shift to cleaner fuels and renewable energy.

Emissions Certainty

The strength of the cap-and-trade approach is that it sets firm limits on emissions. The cap is set at a level designed to achieve a desired environmental outcome (e.g., a reduction of CO₂ emissions to 80 percent of 1990 levels by 2050). A carbon tax allows the quantity of emissions to fluctuate as the demand for energy rises or falls. Allowing emissions to vary from year to year gives firms the flexibility to abate less and pay more in taxes when abatement costs are unusually high (and vice-versa when abatement costs are low). In order to achieve climatic goals, the tax rate can be adjusted over time to attain greater emissions reductions.

Price Predictability

The advantage of a carbon tax is that it fixes the price of carbon emissions. It creates a permanent incentive to reduce emissions, thereby encouraging investment in alternative fuels and energy-efficient technologies that have high up-front costs. Under a cap-and-trade system, the price of emissions permits may vary considerably from year to year. An especially cold winter, for example, could increase the demand for energy and cause a spike in the price of permits. This volatility could weaken incentives to invest in cleaner technologies.

For illustrative purposes, this paper focuses on a cap-and-trade system for carbon dioxide (CO₂).

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Greenhouse Emissions

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To address volatility, most cap-and-trade proposals include cost-control mechanisms.

- Safety valve – establishes a ceiling on the price of permits. If the price reaches this level, the government can sell additional permits at this price to the capped entities.
- Circuit breaker – freezes a gradually declining emissions cap if the permit price rises above a predetermined level.
- Banking – allows companies to save unused allowances for future years.
- Borrowing – allows companies to borrow permits from future years and pay them back, with interest, later.
- Offsets – allow companies to cover some of their emissions by purchasing credits created by carbon mitigation projects (e.g., tree planting) from sources outside the cap-and-trade system.

These mechanisms (with the exception of banking) could delay emissions reductions and undermine the integrity of the cap.

Environmental Effectiveness

The impact of a cap-and-trade system depends on a number of factors. How stringent is the emissions target? How will baseline emissions be measured and a corresponding and appropriate number of emissions permits be determined and distributed? Will the cap be applied economy-wide or only to certain sectors? Does it include cost-control measures that are likely to break the emissions cap?

The impact of a carbon tax depends in large part on whether the tax rate is set high enough to create real market incentives to develop and adopt climate-friendly technologies. Although a carbon tax does not establish a firm limit

on emissions, it applies economy-wide and provides a constant incentive for companies to make carbon-saving investments. The tax rate can be increased over time to provide stronger incentives to reduce emissions.

Equity

Under many cap-and-trade proposals, a substantial portion of the emissions permits are to be distributed free to the capped entities. Research indicates that only a modest portion of the permit value is needed to offset the costs of the cap, but the full amount is passed along in increased prices to consumers. This would disproportionately affect lower-income households because they tend to spend a larger fraction of their income than do higher-income households and because energy products make up a bigger share of their spending. A carbon tax directly raises substantial revenues. These could be used in part to fund "progressive" tax-shifting policies that would reduce the burden of higher energy costs on lower-income groups.

Simplicity and Transparency

A cap-and-trade system requires new institutions (e.g., a system to allocate permits, markets where firms can buy and sell permits, a means of monitoring emissions and trades). Auctioning permits rather than distributing them free could help promote simplicity and transparency. A carbon tax can be levied and collected via existing institutions with experience in enforcing compliance. It is simpler and less expensive to administer and enforce than a cap-and-trade system. Its underlying premise – the price of energy should include the environmental costs associated with its production – is transparent and readily understood. 3

Produced by the LWVUS Climate Change Task Force © 2008 by LWVUS

A Word of Thanks

Contributions from League members and friends continue to make our organization more effective as we promote informed and active participation in government. These generous persons made their donations from February 23 to December 31, 2008.

ASC Justice and Peace Office
 Kay Calvert
 Dolores Carr
 Ruth Cath-Cart Rake
 Katrina Douthit
 Cathy Hoy
 Ellen Laner
 Eleanor Lowe
 LWV Salina (memorial for Mary Anne Powell)
 Royceann Mather
 Janis McMillen
 Mary Michener
 Mary Ann Powell
 Paula Schwach
 Kay Smalley
 Patricia Stein
 Mary Ann Warriner
 Carmen Wilson
 Barbara Withee
 Sarah Wyrick

In Memoriam

Leona Creager, Emporia
 Betty Nichols, Johnson County
 Ellen Laner, Johnson County

Spotlight on Local Leagues



• Lawrence: Action on Transit

The Lawrence Transit System (“the T”) began operation in December 2000 and has run until 2008 with funding from the city’s general budget and federal matching grants. Facing budget shortfalls in mid-2008, however, the Lawrence City Commission opted to submit to the voters a special question concerning continued funding for the T. The original question (Question 2) comprised a local sales tax of 0.2% and would have provided for maintenance of the T at the current level of service. After advocates for the T voiced their concern that this sales tax would not provide enough revenue for improvements to the system and replacement of aging buses, the commission added a second question (Question 3), comprising a 0.05% sales tax, which would be enacted only if both questions passed.

LWV L-DC had strongly opposed submitting the T to this special referendum. In an open letter to the commission, published in the *Lawrence Journal-World* in August, we argued that the bus system is an essential city service and should continue to be funded in the same manner as other such services. Once the commission had approved the questions, however, we were faced with the unsavory decision whether to remain neutral, to oppose the questions on the basis that sales taxes are regressive, or to support the questions.

After a lively debate, with some members in favor of supporting the questions and others in favor of remaining neutral on them, the LWV L-DC Board of Directors voted to

support both questions. Those who favored supporting the questions agreed with the others that League generally does not back sales taxes, but argued that there is nothing in our program that specifically prohibits League from doing this. On the other hand, our local program has included a position advocating public transit in Lawrence since 1971, LWV L-DC has supported the T since before its creation, and League members have served in prominent roles on the Lawrence Public Transit Advisory Committee. Moreover, even a close “No” vote would not merely mean losing local funding for the T until a more transit-friendly commission was elected, but would have caused the city to forfeit federal grants critical to maintaining our bus system. These funds would have been even more difficult to obtain once the city had shown itself unfriendly to public transit. In a press release, issued in early October, League President Carrie Lindsey said, “While the League of Women Voters of Lawrence Douglas County is disappointed that the Lawrence City Commission has chosen to subject the T to a referendum, we recognize that a good public transit system is an essential service for a city the size of Lawrence. Therefore, we strongly support the Lawrence Transit System and urge everyone to vote ‘Yes’ on both ballot questions 2 and 3.”

League expressed its support by issuing this press release, by urging members to vote in favor for the questions in *The Voter*, and by sponsoring an advertisement on ljworld.com, the website of the *Lawrence Journal-World*, and in the newspaper itself. Advertisements were substantially funded by over \$600 in voluntary

contributions sent in response to a letter to League members. The board approved dispersing an amount necessary to make up the difference from an unrestricted account, as neither the Education nor Voter Services funds were appropriate for this purpose. In addition, Lindsey moderated a forum on transit issues, with representatives from the city, social service agencies, transit experts, and a group opposed to the sales taxes. During the general election, both questions passed with overwhelming majorities (70% and 69%, respectively). The sales taxes will be in effect for 10 years. 3

For the press release detailing our support for the two questions, see www.lwvk.org/transit.html.

• Emporia: Senior Care Center Voting Project

Members of the League of Women Voters of Emporia teamed up to take Advance Voting to the elderly who live in Senior Care Centers in Lyon County. The legislation to permit Advance Voting in Senior Care Centers was passed during the 2008 Legislative session and provided for implementation in 2010. Karen Hartenbower, Lyon County Clerk and a League member, encouraged the passage of the legislation and wanted to implement it in Lyon County prior to her retirement in January 2009. She commented that her parents spent several years in a Senior Care Center. Voting was very important to them. While she was able to help her parents get absentee ballots and vote, most residents did not have someone who would help them to cast an absentee ballot.

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Emporia continued

Some counties have begun to implement Advance Voting in Senior Care Centers but, so far as we know, Lyon County is the first county to attempt to provide Advance Voting in all of the Senior Care Centers in the county. The Secretary of State approved the Lyon County project. Karen hired the League to assist in the project because "I knew the League would do it right."

A pilot project was held for the primary election using 3 centers with different resident populations ranging from minimally challenged persons to those with significant visual impairment and those confined to wheel chairs. During the Advance Voting period in October, the project was expanded to include all 7 centers in the county. Those League members who participated in the project received the same training as regular poll workers. The training included all the details of managing an election site such as setting up the electronic voting machines, management of paper and provisional ballots, etc. Additionally, League members were trained in the procedure to take the voting to residents' rooms using the battery powered touch screen and/or a paper ballot. The pilot project helped so much in making the voting for the General Election run quite smoothly. One of the things we learned was not to schedule the election time for afternoons. This is the time for afternoon naps! The Secretary of State has been advised of this discovery.

The 15 Leaguers who participated in this Advance Voting project for the Senior Care Centers were all pleased with the response from the voters. We estimate that at least 90% of those voting would not have been able to participate in the election had it not been for the League taking the

election to them. The smiles and comments of appreciation when they received their "I Voted" buttons made us all proud that we were able to take the election to them. How proud they were and how rewarded we were! 3

Ann Havenhill, Chair of the Senior Care Center election project

From the State President

The 2008 election was historic, and the enthusiasm and passion surrounding candidates and issues made last year both an exciting and a demanding year for us Leaguers. We performed superbly. Now our mission is less glamorous as we make the commitment to follow those issues that concern us, make those phone calls to legislators both state and federal, read your local newspaper and the on-line *Topeka Capitol Journal*, and even occasionally attend public hearings in Topeka and stop by your representative's office. Ask your legislators to add your name to their email lists for regular reports. If they don't send one, request one from a representative in a neighboring district.

**First Call to LWVK 2009
Convention
Highland Hotel
Great Bend
May 2, 2009
8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.**

Each League is allotted one voting delegate for every 15 members but may send as many members as it chooses. Registration forms will be sent the first of February.

And of course, I do hope you will pay special attention to the LWVK E-Reports published about twice a month during the Kansas Legislative Session. Paul Johnson, our Legislative Consultant, will be the principal contributor, but others are invited to submit reports about a League issue of particular interest to them. For over 26 years Paul has been a legislative advocate for poverty programs, energy conservation, and affordable housing. Remember that we need to be accountable to holding our public officials accountable for effective, responsible government.

Contact Your Legislators

The Legislative Hotline (800-432-3924) is a toll free number that operates all year long within the state. It provides bill numbers, bill status and a way for constituents to contact their legislator.

Stay Informed

To track action on a daily basis, go to the Kansas Legislature's **w e b p a g e** (<http://www.kslegislature.org/>). In addition to calendars and journals that summarize daily activity, you can download bills and related material. You will find complete listing of legislators, their office number and direct phone line. 3



Blogging Anyone?

The League of Women Voters of Kansas has been invited to participate as guest bloggers at the Climate and Energy Project of the Salina-based Land Institute. Diane Kuhn, state League President, met with Eileen Horn, who works for the Climate and Energy Project to discuss the League's study of global climate change and ways in which we can collaborate to educate and inspire Kansans to action on this issue.

The Climate and Energy Project has a dynamic new blog: <http://blog.climateandenergy.org/>.

We have accepted an invitation to participate in their Guest Blogger program. Our Theme: Kansas Women Speak Out on Climate Change. We will interview League members around the state. We would like your thoughts on this topic. Email dianekuhn@kc.rr.com

Check out the Climate and Energy Project blog. It is updated daily and always relevant to Kansans.

Look for League blogs the last Friday of every month: January 30, February 27, March 27, April 24, May 22. 3

League Day at the Capitol Thursday, March 19, 2009

League members throughout the state will gather in Topeka to hear about current legislation and state budgeting as well as to meet with state legislators.

8:30 Gather in Willard Hall, First Presbyterian Church, 817 Harrison, for a continental breakfast.

9:00 Opening Remarks

9:15 April Holman, Kansas Action for Children

9:45 Alan Conroy, Legislative Research

10:15 Q and A

10:30 Visit with speakers or go to Capitol

12:00 Lunch in church. Guest Speaker: Nancy Jackson, Climate and Energy Project, Salina Land Institute.

1:00 Return to Capitol as desired

The cost is \$25 which will include coffee, juice, and pastries in the morning and the noon lunch. Please make checks payable to the League of Women Voters of Kansas and mail with the names and addresses of all who plan to attend to: LWVK, 618 S. Kansas Ave., Suite B1, Topeka, KS, 66603.

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The *Kansas Voter* is published by the League of Women Voters of Kansas, a nonpartisan political organization that encourages informed and active participation of citizens in government. The League works to influence public policy through education and advocacy. LWVK is affiliated with the League of Women Voters of the United States and with local Leagues in Kansas communities.

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www.lwvk.org