

Who we elect to be our judges will greatly affect our future

Though the focus is usually on Congress, governor, state legislature or local races, Kansas voters have one other important duty this November — retention of judges.

No one thinks much about it, it's just a list of names they've likely never heard of at the bottom of the ballot. But believe it or not, whether we retain these judges or vote them out is vital to getting the kind of government we want.

There are 65 state-level judges up for retention this year including four Supreme Court justices. Norton Municipal Court Judge Debra Anderson ran non contested and District Court Judge Elliott was not up for retention this year.

Perhaps the biggest reason why nobody cares much about judge retention is that, unless you personally have been in their courtrooms, you don't know who these people are. You might hear about one every now and then. They might issue a controversial ruling, strike down a new law or get caught in a scandal. For instance, you might have heard of Supreme Court Justice Carol Beier after political action committee Kansans for Life launched a "Fire Beier" campaign earlier this year.

The majority of judges, however, fly under the radar.

So how do we, the voters, find out how these judges are performing? How do we decide whether or not they're doing a good job?

First, you can find a candidate list on the Secretary of State's web site, www.kssos.org.

One good resource is the Kansas Commission on Judicial Performance, and if you've never heard of it, it's because the commission has only been around since 2006. The commission surveys those involved in court cases with each judge, such as lawyers, witnesses, court staff and victims, and then makes a public recommendation.

The commission is made up of five lawyers, two retired judges, and six non-lawyers from different areas of the state. They evaluate all of the full-time judges in the state. The commission will make their recommendations for this year's ballot public on Wednesday, they will be posted on www.kansasjudicialperformance.org and released to the media.

Another good resource is judgepedia.org, a wiki database that posts biographical information and links to news stories on each judge. It also has guides to the elections and information on who is running in contested races.

We as a state need to make sure these are the people we want deciding our court cases. If, for instance, you think the smoking ban needs to be overturned, find a judge who opposes it and vote for their retention or find one who supports it and vote for their removal. If you support gay marriage, oppose abortion, support the seatbelt law or oppose gun restrictions, find a judge who shares your values. The judicial branch has its role to play and we must be informed voters and play our role as well. — *Kevin Bottrell*

Your political connection

★ **Governor Mark Parkinson**, 300 SW 10th Ave., Topeka, Kan. 66612. (785) 296-3232

★ **U.S. Sen. Pat Roberts**, 109 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. (202) 224-4774; fax (202) 224-3514

★ **U.S. Sen. Sam Brownback**, 303 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. (202) 224-6521

★ **U.S. Rep. Jerry Moran**, 2443 Rayburn HOB, Washington, D.C. 20515. (202) 225-2715; fax (202) 225-5124

★ **State Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer**, State Capitol Building, Room 262-E, Topeka, Kan. 66612. (785) 296-7399

★ **State Rep. John Faber**, 181 W. Capitol Building, Topeka, Kan. 66612. (785) 296-7500

Letters to the Editor and Thumbs Up e--mail dpaxton@nwkansas.com, or to write 215 S. Kansas Ave. 67654

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Office hours:

8 a.m. - 5:30 p.m. Mon.-Fri.
Phone: (785) 877-3361
Fax: (785) 877-3732
E-mail:

nortontelegram@nwkansas.com

STAFF

Dana Paxton.....general manager
advertising director/
email: dpaxton@nwkansas.com
Dick Boyd.....Blue Jays sports
Harriett Gill.....society editor
Sherry Hickman.....bookkeeping/circulation
Vicki Henderson.....computer production

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Two days of peace to reflect on life

The first of August my husband and I left on a vacation trip that included seeing two of our three children. We drove first to northern Georgia to visit our middle daughter. We arrived on Sunday evening, did laundry and re-packed. Monday morning we left for Savannah, a city we have visited before. I could write about the "old" city and its historic homes and buildings, but what touched me was the two days we spent on the beach at Tybee Island. We rented an umbrella, laid out towels and a blanket and set up stadium chairs. All three of us had books, and we read while we were there.

Each of us took time to walk along the edge of the ocean, play in the warmth of the water and even dig in the sand. For a time I laid under the umbrella, listening to the waves coming in gently. I thought to myself, "There must be a column in this," but nothing really came to me.

Later I realized what a gift I had been given. God had given me an opportunity

Life is Good Rita Speer



to be aware of him and how awesome he is as I looked at the horizon and listened to the waves roll ashore and felt the pull of water as it moved out again. I was able to be mindful of what was around me, the timelessness of the sea's movement, my family members and how much I love them, the almost indescribable beauty around me. I was aware of the differences in the sand between low tide and high tide lines. I enjoyed watching children's glee as they experienced the ocean, some, undoubtedly, for the first time. And I took pleasure as my husband and I played in the sand, trying to dig out a place that the

rising tide would reach.

He and I walked along the beach, holding hands, speaking but a little. I took in the beauty all around me and knew I would long remember these two days. We took some photographs, but there is no way to capture the majesty of the ocean. I haven't even tried to put into words my experience of that time on Tybee Island.

I can easily recall the magnificent sense of peace I experienced during the hours we sat there. We were especially reluctant to leave the second day, for we knew this time at the ocean was over. Now as the season is beginning to shift into autumn, I look back on those hot days and remember how serene they were and how easy it was to be mindful of what was around me. And I know God calls me to continue that mindfulness, to be aware of his presence in everything and everyone around me and to be grateful for his teaching me during two days on the beach.

Understanding anesthesia and your pet

Have you ever gone under anesthesia for a surgery? If so, you know how scary it can be. If not, you might have an idea of how scary it is for a family member to go under anesthesia. The pet population has changed over the years, from just being a pet, to becoming a member of the family. A simple spay or neuter surgery is now a serious surgery that some owners shy away from because of the risks involved with anesthesia.

Pets require anesthesia for many medical and surgical procedures. The only satisfactory outcome to an anesthetic procedure is that your pet fully recovers without any lasting side effects. Using the most recent and updated equipment and protocols during anesthesia is the key. This allows for a lower risk to the patient. You should know the difference between veterinary hospitals in respect to how anesthesia is used. This will allow you to make an educated decision on the risk versus cost of the technique used.

What are the most important considerations regarding anesthesia for my pet? Survival through the procedure is the most important consideration in choos-

Vet tips Amber Nuttycomb, RVT



ing an anesthetic protocol. Prevention of post-operative complications such as organ failure, infection and pain is also important. Careful handling to ensure that your pet is returned to you with as little trauma as possible is necessary. Cost considerations are always essential. Excellent care with advanced equipment, while more costly, provides better care.

Which type of anesthetic agent is the best? Gas anesthesia is usually superior to injectable. Injectable agents are used by many veterinary hospitals because they are less expensive, and because equipment costs are lower. There is little control for the patient once an injectable is used, and residual sedation can last for days. Of the gas anesthetics, Sevoflurane and Isoflurane are the newest and best anesthetic

gases for pets. Both have much less effect on the heart, liver and kidneys than older anesthetics. Pets wake up much faster with little residual effects. Other older gases can cause liver or kidney failure or rapid changes in heart rate.

What steps can you take to avoid complications? Just as in humans, pre-operative blood testing can be done to determine that the anesthetic is safe for your pet. If any signs show that the animal might have trouble, the staff can utilize IV fluid therapy and pre-medications. This allows staff to ensure the anesthetic agent is flushed through the system faster. This puts less strain on your pet's fragile organ systems. During surgery your pet is under constant patient monitoring by qualified staff and state-of-the-art equipment.

Will anesthesia cost more at your hospital? Anesthesia may cost slightly more depending on the veterinary facilities because of the cost of the medications, gas used, the equipment, and the training of staff. Do a little checking around on safety, cost and quality of a clinic before taking your furry family friend in for surgery.

Freedom of speech still exists today

Thomas Jefferson once said, "A democracy cannot be both ignorant and free." Webster defines ignorance as unaware or uninformed. The earliest Colonists realized the importance to a young democracy of being informed; hence newspapers were an early staple of our country. The Colonists, prior experience of having the government control not only the substance but the accessibility of their news made them adamant in their desire for openness. The First Amendment is rooted in history.

News traveled slowly back then as compared to our 24/7 accessibility to current events. Not only was it slow, but the articles were long with much detail. Why? Most people had never witnessed the proceedings let alone the places where events took place so in order to create a

Phase II Mary Kay Woodyard



picture it had to be "painted" with words. Although set aside during different times in history and challenged at others, it continues to be a fundamental right. The First Amendment has endured the test of time (and people).

In those early years, print media and word of mouth were the news sources of the day. Today there are many sources and it is important to listen to several even those with a bias, such as FOX News or MSNBC. It isn't ignorant to listen to

these; it is ignorant to take all news from any one slant. The beauty of the Internet is the ability to listen to news from a global perspective, BBC for instance or to read newspapers from across the country such as the New York Times, Washington Post and Kansas City Star. With the Internet these newspapers are delivered daily to your breakfast table. The First Amendment protects them all.

But back to Jefferson, he realized that knowledge is key to freedom and freedom is the heart of democracy. Douglas MacArthur knew freedom of speech was critical to the rebuilding of Japan. What is intolerable to on, is acceptable to another. True freedom rests in a country's ability, or perhaps its desire, to believe in the power of knowledge and not be threatened by its presence.