Final countdown to interesting election night

By Rob Gilligan, rgilligan@kasb.org

The Nov. 8 General Election is just around the corner, and the final days leading up to the election are going to be interesting. With highly contested federal, state and even local races, voters are sure to be inundated with information in the final week.

If the election cycle felt longer than normal this year, that is because it is. Through a quirk of the calendar, the Kansas primary election was held on the earliest possible day, Aug. 2, and the General Election will be held on the latest possible day possible, Nov. 8. As we wind down this 98-day election period, now is a time to look at the different races and some of the expectations moving forward.

Federal Elections

This year is most notable for being a presidential election year. Almost all projections indicate that Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton will win the election, possibly even picking up electoral votes in states that are traditionally red like Arizona and even Georgia, Missouri and Texas. In addition, there are three third-party candidates: Jill Stein with the Green Party, Gary Johnson with the Libertarian Party and Evan McMullin, an Independent Candidate from Utah.

While none of the third-party candidates look to have an opportunity to win outright, recent polling indicates that McMullin may carry his home state of Utah, pulling away electoral votes that traditionally have gone to the Republican nominee. That still won’t be enough to keep one candidate from reaching the magic 270 electoral votes needed to win office.

Much of the focus has been on Senate races where the Democrats are poised to gain some ground and could take back majority control of the chamber. A total of 33 seats are up for election in the Senate this year, 24 currently held by Republicans and nine held by Democrats.

While U.S. Sen. Jerry Moran, R-Kansas, appears safe in his reelection bid, there are seven U.S. Senate races with a polling margin of 5 percent or less. Of those races, only one is currently held by a Democrat (U.S. Sen. Harry Reid, D-Nev.), but the Democratic candidate is polling higher in five of those races. Add in expected pick-ups in Illinois and Wisconsin and the mix in the U.S. Senate could shift from 54 Republicans to 44 Democrats and two Independents (who caucus with Democrats), to anywhere from 50 to 52 Democrats plus the independents.

In the House, the Republicans hold a strong majority, and while they are expected to lose some seats to Democrats, they will likely maintain control of the chamber. Kansas will see at least one new House member after Roger Marshall defeated incumbent Tim Huelskamp in the August Republican primary.

Of the three other Congressional races in Kansas, the most watched is in the 3rd District where Democratic challenger Jay Sidie is running a competitive campaign against incumbent Republican Kevin Yoder. Complicating the race in this district is the down ticket impact of a less than popular Republican presidential candidate with Donald Trump. This race will be one to watch on election night as returns come in.

State Elections

The Nov. 8 General Election in Kansas will include all seats in the state Legislature as well as five seats on the Kansas State Board of Education. Also on the ballot will be retention elections for five Kansas Supreme Court justices and six judges on the Kansas Court of Appeals. Four races in the Senate and 51 of the House races are in effect decided as there is only one major party candidate on the ballot in those districts. In addition, many of the Senate...continued on page 7
BETTY ARNOLD
WICHITA USD 259
Betty Arnold is heading towards almost a decade of service on the Wichita USD 259 board of education. She was first elected in 2007, and though pleased by the progress made in the intervening years she remains committed to moving forward.

“My primary reason [for first seeking election] was centered around the achievement gap and the downward trend of parent involvement in the educational process for minority sub-groups,” she said. “All parents need to feel valued and respected as an integral stakeholder in the education of their student.”

Programs that strengthen connections between school and home, such as CHAMPS and MTSS, are beginning to reverse the “one size fits all” approach to education.

“Both programs are designed to meet the student where they are and develop an individualized approach to their needs,” Arnold said. “We are seeing huge reductions in suspensions and expulsions.”

Keeping students in school and improving daily attendance are two keys to improving educational opportunities, Arnold said.

“If we do not address the specific areas where a student is struggling, learning is significantly impacted,” she said. “Although data suggests that we are trending in the right direction, we still have major hurdles to overcome.”

Arnold has twice served as president of the Wichita Public Schools USD 259 board and another two times as vice-president. The Wichita school district is the largest in the Kansas with a little over 50,000 students, making it one of the largest 100 public schools systems in the U.S.

She joined the KASB Board of Directors in 2014 as the Region 14 (Wichita USD 259) vice-president. KASB’s governance structure provides for individual representation on the board of directors, nominating committee and legislative committee from the five largest school district members by enrollment. These districts are assigned a region number and the local boards appoint their representative to serve on the board of directors and other committees.

Serving on the KASB board, in addition to participating in other meetings and services, brings opportunities to gain a broader perspective.

“The connection to all students in the state is quite important,” Arnold said. “It is an effective way to engage best practices as well as gain an appreciation for the common problems and possible solutions that are common within our state.”

Arnold also values KASB’s work in developing awareness and creating opportunities for members all across the state to network, noting that support and programs offer by KASB help “ensure that all students in our state are receiving the quality education that is needed to be successful.”

Throughout her tenure on her local board, Arnold has been involved in many projects and initiatives, not the least of which was the district’s $370 million bond issue passed in 2008.

Arnold was a part of the team that worked on passing the largest bond issue to date in the state.

For all of her interest in district, state and national level education issues, it all comes down to the individual student.

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Nearly 400 school officials receive recognition

by Scott Rothschild, srothschild@kasb.org

Nearly 400 school board members and superintendents statewide have qualified for recognition as part of the KASB Leadership Academy.

The awards are based on participation in KASB sponsored training and leadership workshops throughout the year.

Those who accumulate 25 to 74 points are awarded a Level 1 certificate and those who have accumulated 75 points or more receive a Level II certificate.

For this year, 260 board members and 116 administrators received Level 1 certificates and nine board members and 14 administrators received Level II.

The KASB Leadership Academy offers workshops throughout the year which school board members and superintendents are encouraged to attend as a means to continue their education to help them become better district leaders.

For more information about the KASB Leadership Academy, please contact KASB Assistant Executive Director/Marketing and Public Relations Carol Pitts at 785.273.3600 or email her at cpitts@kasb.org.

School bond elections require extra step

As of July 1, 2016, school districts in Kansas now must complete an additional step as part of calling a school bond election.

For many years school districts have been required to submit an application to the Kansas State Board of Education to obtain permission to conduct a bond election when the amount of such election when combined with the outstanding bonds of the school district exceeds 14 percent of the school district’s assessed valuation.

The new additional step relates to the qualification of the construction project for Capital Improvement (Bond & Interest) State Aid. This step now requires that a separate application be made to the State Board.

As required in the School Bond Guide prepared by the Kansas Department of Education…

“In accordance with 2016 Senate Bill 323, any school district that is eligible and desires to receive capital improvement state aid (bond & interest) must apply to the Kansas State Board of Education for such state aid.”

The application generally includes information describing the project so that the committee reviewing the application may consider the following criteria when determining eligibility for Capital Improvement (Bond & Interest) State Aid:

1. Safety of the current facility and disability access to such facility;
2. Enrollment growth and imminent overcrowding as demonstrated by successive increases in enrollment;
3. Impact on the delivery of educational services as demonstrated by restrictive inflexible design or limitations on installation of technology;
4. Energy usage and other operational inefficiencies; and
5. High priority will be given to school districts with a lower assessed valuation per pupil (AVPP) compared to other districts who are to receive capital improvement state aid.

This new application is typically submitted along with the application to conduct a bond election approximately 90 days prior to the proposed election date.

Basic Negotiations Workshop set for November 10

by Scott Rothschild, srothschild@kasb.org

KASB’s Legal and Policy Services team will offer a Basic Negotiations Workshop on Thur. Nov. 10.

To register for the workshop, which will be held at KASB headquarters, 1420 SW Arrowhead Rd. in Topeka, go to www.kasb.org and click on the Event Registration tab or call 1-800-432-2471.

Changes made in 2015 to the Professional Negotiations Act requires that parties must negotiate salary, hours and amounts of work. Each side can select up to three additional terms and all other conditions of professional service are permissive topics for negotiation if both parties agree to discuss them.

Under the old law, there were more than 30 items that could be negotiated each year if raised by either party.

The new law also requires yearly training for those selected to represent the local board and the professional employees’ organization in negotiations.

During the workshop, KASB legal staff will discuss mandatory and permissive negotiation topics, impasse procedures, strategies for boards and recommend contract language.

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support of community awareness organizations such as Urban League, NAACP, Boys and Girls Club and League of Women Voters.

Throughout all of her interests and activates, Arnold remains focused on what she believes to be one of the most important keys to success.

“I value public education and believe strongly that progress of our country starts with a solid education,” she said.
Putting students first means putting Kansas’ future first

When Gov. Sam Brownback invited the public to provide input on what the next school finance plan should be like, KASB and other education advocates saw this as an opportunity to bring together the ideas needed to produce a world-class school finance system.

That is why KASB is urging school advocates to hold and participate in “Put Students First” meetings during the week of Oct. 31-Nov. 4 to promote an understanding of education issues, encourage voting in the Nov. 8 election and develop an ongoing interest in education issues after the election and moving into the 2017 legislative session.

KASB hopes school boards will take affirmative action by passing resolutions stating what they would like to see in a school finance formula, such as one recently approved by the Southeast of Saline USD 306 school board. That resolution says the state has responsibility for providing suitable school funding and that school funding must be equitable, adequate and prepare students for college and careers in a global society. It also says school funding must be predictable and stable, identify sufficient revenue sources to maintain it, recognize and support the local control of public schools in spending decisions and should not contain provisions for using vouchers or tax credits for funding nonpublic schools.

The time is now

The current block grant school finance system will expire at the end of this school year and a new funding mechanism must be in place for the next school year. Our elected leaders are going to change the way schools are funded.

How much should be spent, on what, and what needs to be funded to ensure Kansas students will be able to compete and succeed in the world? How important is class size, the quality of teachers, student safety, extra-curricular activities, counseling, special education and facilities?

These are the questions that a new school funding formula will address and that is why it is crucial that parents, students and education experts are heard in this process and help influence policy makers. Kansas schools are doing a good job now, but they can be better. Lots of conversations need to occur with school board members, administrators, staff, parents and patrons about what is important in your local schools.

Students First deadline

Brownback has requested school finance recommendations be submitted by Nov. 30 to StudentsFirst@ks.gov. Additionally, KASB, the Kansas State Department of Education and USA/Kansas would like to receive your recommendations at schoolfundinginput@kasb.org.

In addition, it is important to let local media know about “Put Students First” events and information.

KASB has been urging school districts to shoot and post videos on district homepages, Facebook and Twitter and to use the #KSPutstudentsfirst so KASB can repost and retweet.

In addition, write letters to the editor, website posts, blog posts and email staff and community members. Also, invite the...continued on page 5

Online help for Put Students First! week

KASB has several supports online that can help your community in the conversation to Put Students First! These include a Funding for the Future powerpoint and Funding the Future Discussion Toolkit, a Quick Start Guide and more.

Just go to www.kasb.org and under the Advocacy Services tab pull down to Put Students First.
Students First, continued from page 4

media and community into your schools for tours and visits.

In a recent opinion piece written by Prairie Hills USD 113 Superintendent Todd Evans to the Sabetha Herald, Evans urges people to send their comments, thoughts and ideas to the governor. “A number of school districts and various organizations were specifically invited to provide input. My desire is for the voices of USD No. 113 to be heard regarding the value we place on education,” Evans wrote.

Let them know
KSDE, KASB and USA/Kansas have developed toolkits to help lead discussions and development recommendations to send to Brownback. In addition, KASB has developed powerpoint presentations. All of this can be accessed at www.kasb.org.

The future of our kids depends on what education advocates and policymakers do now.

To succeed in the world that awaits them, our students need to be prepared for kindergarten.

They need to be guided in their studies by highly qualified teachers and they need to graduate high school and go further.

The primary election in August helped produce a Legislature that is probably going to be more friendly to education interests and that situation could improve even more during the Nov. 8 election. Now that the governor has invited input, it is important we give it to him, and just as importantly, follow up our words with action at the polls and during the next legislative session, which starts Jan. 9, 2017.

Let the governor and all of Kansas know what we want our schools to be like and how we can get there.

This effort starts by putting students first. Oct. 31-Nov. 4 is your opportunity to start down that road by holding meetings or participating in conversations with your schools and neighbors about what our governor, legislators, schools, and ourselves must do to put students first.

How do we Put our Students First in Kansas?

As state elected leaders start the job of writing a new school finance formula, KASB has asked Kansans to think and discuss the best ways to Put Students First.

During recently concluded annual Fall Summits across the state, after meeting with more than 200 school board members, administrators, educators and others, some common themes emerged.

Start early
Get kids ready for kindergarten by improving pre-school options, provide state dollars to fund all-day kindergarten and restore universal access to Parents as Teachers.

Stay engaged
Schools statewide have implemented or are implementing Individual Plans of Study to help students who have expressed an interest in a particular career. This initiative takes many forms, including a broad array of extracurricular activities, partnerships with businesses for work-study programs, updating counseling standards, implementing career and technical education at the middle school level, career fairs and others. Putting students first also means focusing on civic engagement and offering students volunteering as part of their grades.

Get that diploma
While Kansas graduation rates are above the national average, more than 14 percent of students are not completing high school on time. Kansas must continue to improve educational levels. Putting students first means programs directed at students at risk of dropping out, alternative schools, virtual programming, smaller class sizes, and other supports.

Never stop learning
In just a few years, it is projected more than 70 percent of jobs will require some level of post-secondary education, with about 35 percent requiring a four-year degree or higher. Some schools are providing concurrent enrollment offerings with post-secondary education, such as a high school implementing a welding certification program with a community college.

Social and emotional growth
Schools must respond to the mental health needs of students and their families and provide resources such as hiring social workers, behavioral specialists and working with other agencies.

Staff support
Putting students first means also putting teaching professionals first. Adding more teachers and support staff and providing incentives for staff to further their education will ultimately help students.
KASB Legislative Committee nears end of work on report

KASB’s Legislative Committee has one more planned meeting in November to finalize recommendations on KASB policies and resolutions. KASB members can provide input on the proposed document through Nov. 4.

The committee’s recommendations will be forwarded to the 2016 KASB Delegate Assembly in December. Each KASB member entity is encouraged to attend and vote on the changes.

The draft report focuses on academic standards, school funding and operations and local leadership and will provide guidance to KASB when the Kansas Legislature starts the 2017 session in January.

For the first time since the 1990s, the Legislative Committee is reviewing all of KASB’s permanent policies to try to remove outdated language and provide more streamlined positions.

Find the Legislative Committee Report on line at www.kasb.org/assets/Advocacy/16/LegComRpt9.14.pdf. Contact KASB Advocacy or Communications staff with any questions at 800.432.2471 or email legislative@kasb.org.

Candidates wanted for KASB Vice President in regions 1, 4, 5, 6 & 10

by Melissa Holder, mholder@kasb.org

KASB Regional Nominating Committees for regions 1, 4, 5, 6 & 10 have been appointed and are looking for candidates. Regional Vice President elections are held in December, just prior to the Delegate Assembly, at the KASB Annual Convention in Wichita.

Any interested school board member should contact a member of their Regional Nominating Committee to submit their name as a candidate for that Regional Vice President’s position. These nominations are due by November 11. Find member and contact information for each regional nominating committee on line at: www.kasb.org/RegVPElections

Regional Vice Presidents serve a 3-year term as a member of the KASB Board of Directors. Members are eligible to serve two consecutive terms on the board. The board meets five times a year at the KASB office in Topeka.

The KASB Mobile Site will give attendees everything necessary to plan and navigate the conference right at their fingertips. Access speaker bios, session and event descriptions, maps, local resources and connect with colleagues all from your phone or tablet. Watch your email for a link to join!
and House districts lean heavily one way or the other, meaning that the Republican or Democrat depending on the district is pretty safe.

**Kansas Senate**

The current makeup of the Senate is 32 Republicans and 8 Democrats. All 40 seats are up for election every four years. Of the 40 seats, eight incumbents did not run for re-election (including the Senate Vice-President), and an additional six incumbents lost in the primary (including the Senate Majority Leader). All 14 incumbents leaving the Senate are Republican. This means that at least 35 percent of the Senate will be new in 2017 (possibly more depending on general election outcomes).

Of the 36 remaining races for the Senate, 12 of them are still considered competitive based on a combination of criteria.

According to Patrick Miller, Ph.D, Assistant Professor of Political Science at the University of Kansas, these factors indicate a “Competitive Race”:

- Past Close Race for Incumbent
- Non-Incumbent Office Holder (for example, School Board Member, City Council, etc.)
- Lack of Incumbent in the Race
- Fundraising Totals
- Election results in 2014 Governor’s Race (Sam Brownback vs. Paul Davis)

Using these factors and other indicators such as polling data, Dr. Miller has prepared the following chart to follow election night:

Political observers think that the Democrats may be able to pick up somewhere between 3 to 5 additional seats on election night, but as things get closer and other factors like national races affect down ballot voting that number could potentially grow.

**Kansas House**

The current makeup of the House is 97 Republicans (of which about 30 are considered to be moderates) and 28 Democrats. All 125 seats are up for election every two years. Twenty-six incumbents did not seek re-election: 23 Republicans and three Democrats (Rep. Annie Tietze, D-Topeka, resigned in May and Jim Gartner was selected by the Precinct Committee to finish her term this fall). In addition, eight Republican incumbents and one Democratic incumbent were defeated in the August primaries. This means there will be at least 35 new representatives in January when the 2017 legislative session starts.

In 51 of the 125 seats up for election, there is only one major party candidate running. A total of 19 Democrats and 32 Republicans are all but guaranteed election, barring unforeseen circumstances. Two major party candidates will face off in the general election in 74 races (59.2 percent of the 125 seats). In addition, the House will have new leadership in 2017 due to retirements and election results.

When looking at the same factors mentioned earlier, there are at least 22 House races that are competitive in some way.

Just as in the Senate, Democrats say they see a good opportunity to make some gains in the House.

**Judicial**

Voters also will be asked whether to retain Chief Justice Lawton Nuss and justices Maria Luckert, Carol Beier, Dan Biles and Caleb Stegall on the Kansas Supreme Court and judges G. Joseph Pierrer Jr., Steven Leben, G. Gordon Atcheson, Karen Arnold-Burger, David Bruns and Kathryn Gardner on the Kansas Court of Appeals.

At the end of the day on Nov. 8, there will be a more clear picture of the coming year in politics both on the national and state level. You are invited to mark your calendars now to join KASB on our Post Election Webinar at 12:30 p.m. on Wed. Nov. 9 as the KASB Advocacy Team is joined by Professor Miller to analyze the results and discuss the next steps in Kansas.
Superintendent and Executive Leadership Search Services

Choosing a new leader is a momentous decision for a governing board. KASB Leadership Services has a long history of providing superintendent and other executive-level leadership search and placement services to our members. We conduct the majority of searches each year in the state.

Supportive Partnership

Our process is an on-going supportive partnership, and we are dedicated to creating successful and long-term professional relationships. By using KASB’s search service, members can also draw upon KASB legal, research and communications to support the process. And once the new leader is hired, KASB provides follow-up support to both the new leader and the board.

Contact KASB Leadership Services to learn more about our process. 800-432-2471 or edservices@kasb.org.

NSBA heads to Denver in 2017

The National Association of School Boards Annual Conference is scheduled for April 25-27, 2017 in Denver, CO. The NSBA Annual Conference and Exposition brings together more than 7,000 school board members, superintendents, and education leaders from across the country and around the globe and gain valuable knowledge and information in five key areas: Leadership, Advocacy, Technology + Learning, Urban school issues, and School law. You also will gain ideas and strategies through more than 200 programming sessions, workshops, speakers, site visits and exhibitors, on cutting-edge content, best practices, and the freshest ideas to support student achievement.