

Jake LaTurner supported Brownback's plan that destroyed Kansas's Medicaid program. Because of LaTurner and Brownback, nearly 150,000 Kansans are without access to affordable healthcare and medical clinics have been forced to close.

Brownback's 2012 Tax Experiment Created A \$900 Million Two-Year Budget Gap In Kansas. "The nation's most aggressive experiment in conservative economic policy is dead. Republican majorities in the Kansas legislature on Tuesday night voted to reverse the deep tax cuts engineered by Governor Sam Brownback five years ago, blaming them for blowing a hole in the state's budget that threatened the viability of its schools and infrastructure. [...] Lawmakers in the GOP-controlled House and Senate came within a few votes of undoing the tax cuts in February as lawmakers searched for revenue to plug a nearly \$900 million two-year budget gap and meet a court order demanding more funding for education. [The Atlantic, [6/7/17](#)]

2012: LaTurner Indicated That He Wanted To Lower Taxes Further Than Proposed By The Brownback Administration, "Kansas Gov. Sam Brownback awoke Wednesday with a majority in the state Senate all but guaranteed for his fellow conservative Republicans to help him pursue new limits on annual government spending, further cuts in income taxes and greater influence over who sits on the state's appellate courts. [...] But many conservatives have ambitions for lowering taxes further. For example, Jake LaTurner, a conservative Pittsburg Republican and staffer for U.S. Rep. Lynn Jenkins who defeated Marshall, said he'd like legislators to tackle high property, sales and gasoline taxes, particularly in border counties where rates are higher than in Missouri and Oklahoma. 'We just can't prosper until we get competitive,' he said." [Iola Register, [8/9/12](#)]

LaTurner Said That Kansas Needed To "Get Out Of The Way" To Allow Businesses To Compete With Missouri And Oklahoma. "The Southeast Kansas unemployment rate is disproportionately higher than the rest of the state," he said. 'I think it is because Topeka doesn't seem to understand or care what it's like to live in a border county. We lose a lot of revenue to other states, a lot of our residents work in other states, and it's very difficult in that regard.' LaTurner said he believes government should create the most advantageous conditions for businesses to grow, then 'get out of the way.' 'What I mean by that is, investments in worthy causes such as our infrastructure, public safety, education, while at the same time working toward a more competitive tax system with neighboring states. "It's a great balancing act — it's very difficult to do,' he said. He also would focus on funding for the continued expansion of the U.S. Highway 69 corridor, and would advocate for a review of the tax structure. 'When you look at Kansas compared to Missouri and Oklahoma, Kansas has a higher sales tax, a higher property tax, a higher gas tax, than both of those states. That makes it very, very difficult for us to compete,' he said." [Joplin Globe, [10/19/12](#)]

NRP: State Revenue Plummeted By 10% In One Year, Causing The State To Cut Medicaid, K-12 Funding, And Pension Contributions And Halt Construction Projects. "[W]hen the tax cuts went into effect in 2014, their failure was seen almost instantly. State revenues plummeted by almost \$700 million, Kriz says. 'To put it in context, the state general fund budget is about \$6 billion, and so that's 10 percent revenue loss in one year,' he says. 'That's a lot for any government to have to make [up].' State lawmakers tried to balance the budget by tapping into reserves and the highway fund. They put construction projects on hold; pension contributions dropped; and Medicaid was cut. The state also refashioned the school funding formula and closed and consolidated several school districts. School funding consumes about half of Kansas' budget." [NPR, [10/25/17](#)]

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2016: Brownback Cut \$120 Million From KanCare, Kansas State Medicaid Program. “Kansas will forgo more than \$120 million in combined state and federal money for its Medicaid system in the wake of state budget cuts that spared public education. Gov. Sam Brownback's office simultaneously announced his signing of the budget and \$97 million in cuts to state spending on Wednesday. More than half of that will come out of the state's Medicaid system, which provides health coverage for low-income Kansans and accounts for 20 percent of the state's general fund budget.” [Wichita Eagle, [5/18/16](#)]

STATE BUDGET

Brownback cuts Medicaid payments, higher-ed spending

State giving up \$120 million in state and federal Medicaid money

BY BRYAN LOWRY
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Brownback cut higher education and most state agencies by 4 percent, excluding public safety, K-12 education and state hospitals. These moves are expected to leave the state with \$87.5 million in its general fund at the end of June 2017.

[Wichita Eagle, [5/19/16](#)]

Kansas Hospitals Closed And Struggled To Survive In The Wake Of Brownback's KanCare Cuts. “Stormont Vail Health of Topeka is closing two regional clinics because of financial pressures created by recent cuts in Medicaid reimbursements and the decision by state leaders not to expand the health care program. Stormont will close Cotton O'Neil clinics in Lyndon and Alma, according to a news release issued Thursday. The Lyndon clinic will close Dec. 31. The clinic in Alma will close Jan. 31, 2017. [...]Republican Gov. Sam Brownback ordered the cuts in KanCare, the state's privatized Medicaid program, to balance the state budget in the wake of continued revenue shortfalls. The cuts, which took effect July 1, will save the state an estimated \$56.3 million but also will trigger a loss of \$72.3 million in federal matching funds. Combined, the managed care organizations that administer the \$3 billion KanCare program and the health care and service providers they have contracts with face more than \$128 million in cuts. Of particular concern to Stormont Vail and other providers is the proposed 4 percent reduction in reimbursement rates, which would amount to about \$87 million of the \$128 million total.” [Kansas Health Institute, [9/15/16](#)]

October 2016: LaTurner Still Said He Hadn't Decided Whether He Would Vote For Medicaid Expansion In Kansas, Which Would Insured 150,000 More Kansans. "Health care, including Medicaid expansion in Kansas, and other budget issues were the main topics. LaTurner said he supports having a vote on Medicaid expansion in Kansas, but he wasn't clear on how he would vote. He said the Affordable Care Act, which many call Obamacare, is not working as it should and premiums are increasing for consumers. Grant supports Medicaid expansion in Kansas because it will insure 150,000 more people in the state and improve the economy to boot. 'The economic opportunity for the expansion of Medicaid is great. We have veterans in back that will benefit from the expansion of Medicaid because the VA does not always cover what they need to,' Grant said. The state lost more than a billion dollars since 2014 from failing to expand Medicaid. 'That's a crime,' Grant said." [Parsons Sun, 10/27/16]

NOTE: Please see primary source #1 for "20161027 Parsons Sun"

March 2017: LaTurner Voted Against Expanding Medicaid, Which Would Insured 150,000 More Kansans. In March 2017, LaTurner Voted Against HB2044. "HB 2044, as amended, would establish the KanCare Bridge to a Healthy Kansas Program (Program). The Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) would be required to administer and promote the Program and provide information to potential eligible individuals who live in medically underserved areas of the state. The bill would modify the eligibility requirements for the Kansas Medical Assistance Program, on or after January 1, 2018, to include any non-pregnant adult under 65 years of age, who is a U.S. citizen or legal resident and who has been a resident of Kansas for at least 12 months, whose income does not exceed 133 percent of the federal poverty level (FPL), to the extent allowed under the federal Social Security Act as it exists on the effective date of the bill, and subject to the requirements of the Program. The bill would require referral to workforce training programs, create a Program Drug Rebate Fund and a Program Privilege Fee Fund, create a health insurance coverage premium assistance program, address federal denial and approval of financial participation, require submission of a waiver request to the federal government, require various Program reports to the Legislature, and create a Program Working Group." The Senate passed the bill by a vote of 25-14. The Governor vetoed the measure. The legislature failed to override the Governor's veto. [HB2044, Senate Floor Vote (Final Adoption), [3/28/17](#)]

Brownback Vetoed The Expansion Bill. "Governor Sam Brownback vetoed a bill that would expand KanCare — the state's Medicaid program — Thursday. The Kansas House of Representatives passed the bill — which would expand KanCare to cover 180,000 additional Kansans who are not disabled — with an 81-44 vote last month. The Kansas Senate passed the bill with a 25-14 vote, just two votes shy of a two-thirds majority. Representative Monica Murnan (D-Pittsburg) voted in favor of the expansion. The bill came back to the House Thursday for a vote to override the governor's veto, but was tabled. Murnan said she will vote in favor of the override, and she believes it will be one of the first items of business for the House on Monday." [Morning Sun, [3/31/17](#)]

Medicaid Cuts Resulted In The Closing Of Two Topeka Regional Clinics. "Stormont Vail Health of Topeka is closing two regional clinics because of financial pressures created by recent cuts in Medicaid reimbursements and the decision by state leaders not to expand the health care program. [...] 'We want the people of Lyndon and Alma, and the surrounding area, to know that this decision was not made lightly,' said Randy Peterson, Stormont's chief executive officer. 'However, the current 4 percent Medicaid cuts, which totaled \$3 million in reduced reimbursements for Stormont Vail Health, along with the impact of the state's failure to expand Medicaid makes it difficult to continue to fund these community clinics.'" [Kanas Heath Institute, [9/15/16](#)]

Brownback's Cuts To KanCare Concerned Health Service Providers Because Of The Proposed 4 Percent Reduction In Reimbursement Rates, Which Would Amount To About \$87 Million Of The \$128 Million Total. "Republican Gov. Sam Brownback ordered the cuts in KanCare, the state's privatized Medicaid program, to balance the state budget in the wake of continued revenue shortfalls. The cuts, which took effect July 1, will save the state an estimated \$56.3 million but also will trigger a loss of \$72.3 million in federal matching funds. Combined, the managed care organizations that administer the \$3 billion KanCare program and the health care and service providers they have contracts with face more than \$128 million in cuts. Of particular concern to Stormont

Vail and other providers is the proposed 4 percent reduction in reimbursement rates, which would amount to about \$87 million of the \$128 million total.” [Kanas Heath Institute, [9/15/16](#)]

1. Local and state candidates speak at forum in Chetopa Tuesday

Parsons Sun
By Ray Nolting
October 27, 2016

CHETOPA — Candidates for two contested races that include Labette County territory attended a forum Tuesday night in Chetopa at the Mae Lessley Community Center.

The Chetopa Chamber of Commerce organized the event.

Jacob LaTurner, a Pittsburg Republican, and Lynn Grant, a Frontenac Democrat, are facing off in the Nov. 8 election for the 13th Senate District seat that LaTurner now occupies.

LaTurner has served as senator in the district that includes Chetopa and Richland Township in extreme southeast Labette County. Grant has been an educator, business owner and wife of a long-serving lawmaker from Southeast Kansas, Bob Grant.

The other contested race involves the Register of Deeds Office in Labette County. Incumbent Corene Beason, a Democrat, was defeated in the August primary election by challenger Julie Becker. Beason, who has been in the deeds office for 12 years and has a business degree, is now running a write-in campaign against Becker. Becker's name will be on the Nov. 8 ballot so voters would have to write in Beason's name and check the box next to the write-in line for the vote to count.

Other candidates attending Tuesday are unopposed: Sheriff candidate Darren Eichinger, state House Rep. Mike Houser, Labette County Attorney Stephen Jones and Labette County Treasurer Crystal Addis.

Each candidate had a few minutes to introduce themselves before the audience asked questions of them.

The candidates:

Julie Becker: Julie Becker, an Oswego Democrat, won the August primary election by 48 votes.

Becker formerly worked for the county in the clerk's office, the treasurer's office and the appraiser's office. In recent years she's helped her husband with farm work and helped with his grandmother.

She said she is looking forward to working as register of deeds.

Becker said she is familiar with the CIC software used in the deeds office and is knowledgeable with computers and other software programs. She said she enjoys working with the public and would strive to keep the deeds office open 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. She said sometimes the office may close over a lunch period when the deputy in the office is away from work. She would work through her lunch period to keep the office open.

Becker has a bachelor's degree in elementary education from Pittsburg State University. She also served on the board for the Labette County Farm Bureau.

Corene Beason: Register of Deeds Corene Beason, an Altamont Democrat, has worked in the deeds office for 12 years. She is serving the unexpired term of former deeds register Donna Strickland. This year, she sought her first election but lost in the August primary to Julie Becker by 48 votes.

Beason hopes to turn this around by running a write-in campaign for the Nov. 8 election.

She decided to conduct this campaign after weighing her options after the August primary loss, which had a pretty low turnout for the Democrats. She thinks the November election will have more voters because of the presidential election and may better represent the consensus of the county.

“I enjoy my job and I think the citizens of Labette County need someone in here who knows what they are doing. They’re going to spend a lot of time training a new one who has not been in this office,” Beason told the Sun previously.

Beason is a certified register of deeds. She has a degree in business administration.

“I like the people that come in and some of them are just so grateful that you have helped them find their ancestors or that you can give them back to 1870 on their pieces of property and let them look,” Beason said at the forum.

She said her philosophy is to treat people as you would want to be treated.

Lynn Grant: Democrat Lynn Grant came to Southeast Kansas five decades ago and got married. Bob and Lynn Grant lived in Cherokee for 40 years. They owned a tavern during that time, she worked for USD 247 and served on the Cherokee City Council. She retired from Pittsburg State University. The couple moved to Capaldo near Frontenac five years ago. Bob died in December 2015.

Grant said she has enjoyed the campaign against LaTurner.

“Each community that I visit is unique in many ways and the same in many ways,” Grant said.

“The decision to make this run for office was a very difficult one. It took a lot of discussion, prayer, courage and commitment and these are the qualities that I will take to serve you in Topeka. I know I speak softly, but I carry a big stick,” she said.

She said the problems the state faces are difficult to solve, but her experience will benefit her as a lawmaker, she said.

“The problems we face now in our state will not be solved quickly. In fact it will take longer to recover than it did to get into this situation we are in. I believe we need a change now in order to break the tailspin that Kansas is in right now,” Grant said.

She said she’s not looking to make politics a career. She’s not attached to purse strings, party strings or puppet strings.

“The only ones I have to answer to are you, God and myself. I love this state, but it can only be great when it lifts its people up.”

Jake LaTurner: Jake LaTurner, a Pittsburg Republican, has been in the state Senate since 2013.

LaTurner said he’s been involved in meaningful reform in the Senate during his tenure.

He passed the property tax lid law, which goes into effect in January and gives individuals a chance to vote on a property tax increase if it’s above the inflation rate. He’s worked on welfare reform, making the program offer a hand up to individuals and require work and job training, along with drug testing and treatment.

“Kansas has a lot of challenges coming up in January. And we need to meet those challenges. We need to make sure we have a fair tax code in Kansas and to do that without burdening the middle class and the working poor any more than they already are. We need to make sure we have a balanced budget. A balanced budget will get us a long ways down the road,” he said.

He supports a measure that would withhold pay from lawmakers if they don’t pass a balanced budget.

“That’s a minimum, a minimum, that you should expect out of your legislators,” he said.

He believes in transparency in the Statehouse and would like to livestream Senate hearings, committee hearings and proceedings. But there is resistance from other lawmakers.

LaTurner also would like to work on the school finance formula next session and make sure that Johnson County lawmakers don't write it.

"Because we know how that will end up."

Darren Eichinger: Republican sheriff candidate Darren Eichinger has been in law enforcement for 35 years and worked with the sheriff's department until Sheriff Robert Sims terminated him in September 2015. Eichinger ran against Sims in the primary election in August and won.

Eichinger served in the Marine Corps before becoming a certified Kansas law enforcement officer, a career that took him from patrolman to detective. His wife, Jennifer, is a CPA in business in Parsons. They have two sons.

Eichinger said he wants better, proactive law enforcement in the county. He would like to get the neighborhood watch program going again in the county. He also would like to reintroduce a property identification system that would help identify owners of property that is recovered. He would like jailers to become certified law enforcement officers to help in times of transition in the department and he would like to add three deputies to road patrol by rearranging schedules.

More deputies on the road would improve response times, which he thinks is important, and would allow for more coverage of the county.

Neighborhood watch would accomplish a couple of goals. First, citizens could help report crimes because they know who belongs and who does not in their areas. Second is building a relationship with citizens.

"We have to involve the citizens with law enforcement to build up a rapport with them," he said.

The groups would meet monthly with a deputy.

"It will build that bridge and build that bond with law enforcement and the communities."

He also would work out mutual aid agreements so law enforcement from Parsons, Chetopa, Oswego and Altamont could respond to calls up to five miles outside of their city limits.

Stephen Jones: Labette County Attorney Stephen Jones, an Altamont Republican, is serving the unexpired term of Hillary McKinney, who resigned. He is seeking his first four-year term. He faces no opposition in November.

He said his job is about placing people who broke the law on probation or in prison.

He comes from Arizona, but his trip to Kansas also passed through Louisiana and Utah before he attended law school at Washburn University.

Jones said he's been happy with his decision to come to Labette County 5 1/2 years ago to join the county attorney's office.

"It's been wonderful for my family," he said of his wife and five children.

Jones said he hopes to see justice done in his term. Sometimes justice is probation rather than prison for criminals.

"If someone deserves a second chance I strongly believe in a second chance. I don't believe that everyone deserves to go to prison. I really don't," Jones said.

Probation can be helpful to criminal defendants, but sometimes the crimes are so bad that a person should go to prison.

“But there are people who do not deserve a second chance, there are people whose actions are so horrible that they don’t deserve that,” he said.

Victims suffer greatly because of crime, he said. Not only in violent crime and drug crime, but in property crime.

“It just violates you. It violates your sense of peace. It violates your sense of security,” Jones said.

Mike Houser: Mike Houser, a Columbus Republican, has served four years in the Kansas House of Representatives. He has no opposition in the Nov. 8 election so will return to the Statehouse for another two-year term.

He said he was blessed by the fact he faces no opposition and didn’t have to campaign heavily this time. He said serving his district is his pleasure and he takes his job seriously.

When he became a lawmaker, some legislators thought Kansas stopped at U.S. 400. He said he and LaTurner had to tell them there were people and property south of that highway that crosses the state.

Crystal Addis: Crystal Addis, an Oswego Democrat, has been in the treasurer’s office for 37 years and is seeking her fourth four-year term as treasurer.

She is a lifelong Labette County resident. She briefly touched on the many facets of what the treasurer’s office does.

Addis faces no opposition in the Nov. 8 election and encouraged people to vote Nov. 8.

Questions

The candidates also fielded questions from the audience Tuesday.

Health care, including Medicaid expansion in Kansas, and other budget issues were the main topics.

LaTurner said he supports having a vote on Medicaid expansion in Kansas, but he wasn’t clear on how he would vote. He said the Affordable Care Act, which many call Obamacare, is not working as it should and premiums are increasing for consumers.

Grant supports Medicaid expansion in Kansas because it will insure 150,000 more people in the state and improve the economy to boot.

“The economic opportunity for the expansion of Medicaid is great. We have veterans in back that will benefit from the expansion of Medicaid because the VA does not always cover what they need to,” Grant said.

The state lost more than a billion dollars since 2014 from failing to expand Medicaid.

“That’s a crime,” Grant said.

Houser said he’s not sold on Medicaid expansion because of the experience of other states that have expanded the medical program for the poor. He said it will take a lot of convincing for him to support expansion.

Another question dealt with the politically charged atmosphere between lawmakers and the judiciary over the school finance issue. Some lawmakers think the state Supreme Court overstepped its bounds in the school funding lawsuit by saying how much should be spent. Lawmakers fought back by threatening judiciary funding.

Grant agreed that lawmakers are trying to take over the judiciary, if not through the budget matters through the way judges and justices are selected.

“I believe that we have the constitution that will guide any decision by any court. And those positions have to be based on the constitution. They can’t be based on public opinion,” she said.

LaTurner said the Supreme Court doesn't need activist judges that create law from the bench or appropriate money from the bench.

Houser said he would like for the court and Legislature to work together rather than fight. He, too, thinks the court overstepped its bounds in the school finance fight.

On a question about how many businesses came to Kansas since Gov. Sam Brownback's 2012 tax measures were passed, Houser was the only one who tried to answer. He said Southeast Kansas won't see much growth in businesses, but he didn't have a number of businesses created after the tax cuts. He doesn't think increased taxes are the way to grow the economy, though.

"It's a slow boat. The economy is a slow boat," Houser said.

Another questioned how long the state should wait on Brownback's plan to work when the jobs aren't coming, the policy isn't working and the budget is unbalanced.

LaTurner said Brownback's plan was just too big and implemented too fast. The goal is noble, but it was too big from the outset and the state has not adjusted. To complicate matters, industries in Kansas have had a tough time and that's further depressed tax receipts.

Grant said businesses don't have an interest to come to Kansas, a state that neglects its schools and roads.

"I think that's the big part of people interested in coming to this state. If they know they have a good education system that's good for their kids, that's good for the workers that they intend to hire. If they know that their whole highway programs are being kept up and building safe roads and repairing bridges, that's another plus. And right now we don't have that. I think that we have to work within ourselves as well as reach out to other businesses to come into Kansas or to expand into Kansas," Grant said.

Both Grant and LaTurner wanted to get budget matters settled if elected and re-elected. Secondary projects would be expanding Medicaid for Grant and formulating a school finance formula that benefits Southeast Kansas schools for LaTurner.