KU libraries set book sale

For the first time in many years, Kansas University's libraries will have book sales to repurpose duplicate volumes and those that do not meet collection guidelines.

The first sale will be from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday, Dec. 3, through Thursday, Dec. 6, in Watson Library on KU's Lawrence campus. Subsequent sales are scheduled for February 4-7, March 3-6, April 7-10 and May 5-8, all in Watson Library. During the sale weeks, Mondays will be reserved for patrons with a KUID; sales will be open to the public on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. A bag sale will be offered from 4-8 p.m. on Thursdays.

Hardcover books will be priced at $3 and paperback books will be $1. Payments can be made with cash or Master Card or Visa credit or debit cards.

Proceeds from the sales will be used to purchase new books and electronic resources for the libraries' collections. Unsold books will be donated to Books for Africa, a nonprofit organization dedicated to literacy programs in Africa.
Kansas justices hear arguments on a law restricting protests at military services.

By DAVID KLEPPER
The Star’s Topeka correspondent

TOPEKA | The fate of Kansas’ funeral protest ban hinges not on free-speech issues but on whether lawmakers may seek court rulings on laws before they take effect.

This question, which was prompted by creative legislative tactics, was the subject of arguments Thursday before the Kansas Supreme Court.

Earlier this year, lawmakers enacted restrictions aimed at a Topeka church that regularly protests military funerals. The legislation would ban protests within 150 feet of a funeral for one hour before and two hours after a service.

Violators would face fines and even jail time.

Fearing that the Westboro Baptist Church might win in a legal challenge, lawmakers inserted a “trigger” provision.

The trigger said that before the restrictions could take effect, Attorney General Paul Morrison had to seek a Supreme Court ruling on the constitutionality of the restrictions. The trigger helped persuade lawmakers, who said the last thing they wanted was to pay the church’s legal fees.

But Morrison, skeptical of the Legislature’s creation, asked the court to strike down the trigger and allow the restrictions to take effect without it.

Stephen McAllister, a University of Kansas law professor who argued the case for Morrison, told justices Thursday that allowing lawmakers to consult courts before laws go into effect would set a dangerous precedent. The worry? That the court could become a legislative sounding board for any controversial legal issue or, worse, that it could usurp the Legislature’s power to craft law.

“Giving advice to a legislature or a governor is not an appropriate role for the court,” McAllister said.

But an attorney for the other side argued that the Legislature was within its rights to ask for the ruling. The Legislature is not named in the lawsuit; Gov. Kathleen Sebelius, who signed the bill, is. Her attorney, Jay Warren, said lawmakers just wanted to ensure that the law worked.

“The Legislature was being realistic,” he said.

Justices asked questions Thursday that could indicate they have concerns about issuing rulings to assure the concerns of lawmakers.

The court will not rule until at least February.

The court could strike down the trigger but allow the restrictions on funeral picketing to go into effect, though without the court’s endorsement.

If the court decides the trigger is unconstitutional but refuses to separate it from the rest of the law, the restrictions will be struck down with the trigger.

Or the court could find the trigger constitutional and agree to weigh in on the restrictions.

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Dr. John Snyder, MD, a graduate of Stanford University and Harvard Medical School, spoke to the Winfield Rotary Club Nov. 21. Snyder spoke about the major medical research projects which the H.L. Snyder Medical Foundation is partially supporting.

Included is a project at the University of Kansas in which researchers have been able to engineer a small physical form of Taxol, a chemotherapy agent which is being suspended in water or saline to be injected in patients with abdominal cancer. By using this process, it is believed many more patients will be able to tolerate the chemotherapy.

The Snyder Foundation is also funding two research projects at Stanford University Medical School. The first is the work of Dr. Seung Kim, who is working on a method of directing embryonic stem cells into becoming pancreatic islet cells that produce insulin with the goal that these could be transplanted into type-1 (juvenile) diabetes.

The second Stanford project, led by scientist, Dr. Karl Deisseroth, involves stimulating stem cells in the brain to develop rapidly and to replace nerve cells in the brain that have degenerated because of Alzheimer’s disease.

The Snyder Foundation’s most recent grants have been to support research in prostate cancer at Harvard Medical School’s Dana Farber Cancer Institute.
Grant aims to reduce looming shortage of math, science teacher

LAWRENCE (AP) — University of Kansas officials hope that a new $2.4 million federal grant will help them reduce the shortage of math and science teachers in Kansas.

The program, called UKanTeach, gives students majoring in math or one of four areas of science the opportunity to earn a secondary school teacher certification without going through the School of Education. It will allow students to earn a science or math degree and a teaching license in four years.

Officials estimate that Kansas public schools will be short some 400 math and science teachers.

The Kansas program is patterned after a similar program at the University of Texas, which has produced about 70 math and science teachers each year.

Funds for the program were awarded Friday by the National Math and Science Initiative, one of 10 awards to universities to replicate the Texas program. The grant includes $1 million that will be awarded only if Kansas can obtain matching funds from private sources.

UKanTeach has been endorsed by the Kansas Board of Regents, which plans to ask legislators for funds to support the program.

Gov. Kathleen Sebelius, who attended the presentation Friday in Topeka, said the grant has implications for the future.

"Math and science education is key to Kansas' ability to succeed in the global economy," Sebelius said in a written statement. "UKanTeach is an innovative program that will produce the teachers our state needs to help our students thrive in these subjects."

Janis Lariviire, wife of university Provost Richard Lariviire, is familiar with the program after the couple's years at Texas. She said Kansas has historically exported teachers and that the shortage problem has emerged in the past decade.

"This program is designed to be completed in a typical four-year time frame," Lariviire said.

However, math and science majors could complete their teaching requirements in two years, if they enter the program as a junior or senior.
Keep selecting justices on merit, not politics

By Linda S. Parks

It's an old story.
In the 1930s Franklin Roosevelt, angry about rulings by the U.S. Supreme Court, had a bill introduced in Congress to restructure the appointment system of the court.

Recently, backing some conservative lawmakers who were upset by two decisions of the Kansas Supreme Court, University of Kansas law professor Stephen J. Ware argued that the Kansas system should be revamped to give the politicians more power and control ("Bar has too much power in picking state's justices," Nov. 29 Opinion).

Roosevelt was wrong with his ax grinding. And so is Ware.

In Kansas, we have a Supreme Court Nominating Commission that consists of nine members. Five are lawyers (one from each congressional district in the state and one who serves as chairman) who are elected by a vote of all lawyers licensed and living in Kansas. Four members are appointed by the governor. There are term limits.

Applicants for appellate court positions submit their names to the commission. The commission deliberates long and hard, narrows the list to the three most qualified applicants, and submits those names to the sitting governor to make the appointment to the court. Thereafter, the justices come before the voters, who decide in regular elections whether these individuals will be retained on the court.

The system is based on merit, not politics. But sometimes members of the party in power prefer politics — especially when they disagree with the court.

Knowing we all hate secrets, Ware argued disingenuously that the commission operates in "secret." But consider what the commission really does: It interviews applicants and discusses matters typically discussed in an employment setting. Those matters should be private.

Likewise, it is vital that the commissioners be candid in their discussions about the applicants. That would be impossible if the discussions were broadcast to the world. By the way, I have read Ware's paper, studying Kansas' selection system, and he makes no suggestion that the meetings not be private. But he certainly gets our attention by saying they are a "secret."

Ware also argued that the commission should be changed because of how many lawyers serve on it. Imagine that: lawyers on a commission that discusses the lawyers they know and their qualifications for a job about which lawyers know the most. Even Ware, in his paper, states, "Lawyers, because of their professional expertise and interest in the judiciary, are well-suited to recognizing which candidates for a judgeship are especially knowledgeable and skilled lawyers." And that is exactly the reason lawyers serve on the commission.

In his paper, Ware mentions the option of changing the system by taking the retention vote away from the citizens and instead giving the power to decide the qualifications of the justices to politicians. More power to politicians? That's not what most Kansas citizens support.

The current system is fair and inclusive and eliminates the raw politics that might otherwise taint the process. No reform is needed, because the system works well.

Linda S. Parks, a Wichita attorney, is president of the Kansas Bar Association.