State sees jump in campaign money

Money flowing in has doubled in 20 years.

By CHRIS GREEN
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TOPEKA (HNS) — Prospective voters shouldn’t expect the pre-election barrages of campaign mailings and TV political ads to end in Kansas anytime soon.

A recently released state report shows the amount of money flowing into campaigns for statewide offices and Kansas House seats has nearly doubled over the past two decades, although the figures don’t reflect inflation.

The increase comes while election costs have jumped nationally. However, two Kansas political scientists say the state’s trend might not be particularly worrisome.

Chapman Rackaway, assistant professor of political science at Fort Hays State University, said state political campaigns remain cheap by comparison.

“We still campaign in a pretty bare-bones fashion,” Rackaway said.

Plus, voters do benefit from being able to hear political pitches bought through campaign dollars, University of Kansas political science professor Burdett Loomis said.

“I honestly think that’s good for democracy,” Loomis said. “I think we want to watch out for spending too little.”

The recent state Governmental Ethics Commission analysis of campaign finances shows that in the 2006 cycle, candidates for statewide offices, including governor and attorney general, took in a record $13.187 million. That’s up from the $7.61 million spent on those races in 1986.

Gov. Kathleen Sebelius, a Democrat running for re-election, took in more than $5.3 million alone during the 2006 cycle.

Candidates for seats in the state House of Representatives garnered a record $5 million in campaign contributions for the 2006, up from the $1.72 million collected in 1986.

In all, the figure shows that over the last 20 years, political contributions to state and House races have nearly doubled from $9.3 million to $18.2 million. The totals for state Senate seats, last contested in 2004 and up for a vote in 2008, and weren’t included in the report.

While those jumps may seem staggering at first glance, both Loomis and Rackaway said that much of those increases could be attributed to inflation.

Nearly everything costs more in 2006 than it did in 1986. According to an online federal labor statistics calculator, $1 had the same buying power in 1986 for urban households that $1.84 had in 2006.

If that inflationary rate is used to adjust previous campaign donation totals, the increase in contributions dwindles to about 6 percent spread over a 20-year period.

‘A lot more money’

However, even if campaign contributions to candidates haven’t grown much in inflation-adjusted dollars, that doesn’t mean there haven’t been changes in who’s donating the money — and a general increase in money’s influence over Kansas politics.

Out-of-state groups have significantly stepped up their contributions, spending $2.3 million in 2006, about four times more than 1986. Increased contributions by individuals, political action committees and businesses, corporations or unions, also exceed the rate of inflation.

Plus, the state report only accounts for dollars directly donated to candidates, transactions that account for just a portion of money channeled into state political campaigns.

In recent elections, the state has seen a significant increase in activity by independent groups spearheading efforts to elect or defeat candidates, said Carol Williams, executive director of the state Governmental Ethics Commission.

Their efforts can be difficult to quantify because third-party groups don’t have to report which candidates they want to elect or defeat.

In addition, Williams said other interest groups that have flexed their muscles recently don’t have to file reports at all because they don’t tell people how to vote.

Still, it’s safe to say, Williams said, that there’s more money being spent to influence elections than in the past, even factoring in inflation.
New University of Kansas students and their parents from Grant, Haskell, Morton, Seward, Stanton and Stevens counties are invited to a picnic hosted by the KU Alumni Association and its Southwest chapter at 6:30 p.m. June 21, in Hugoton.

The event will be at the home of Erick and Debbie Nordling, HC 1. Area alumni, new students, students interested in learning more about KU and parents are invited to attend and enjoy complimentary food and beverages. Each new Jayhawk also will receive a free T-shirt.

Alumni association staff will arrive with the signature KU trailer full of grills, burgers and brats for the festivities. Current KU students, alumni and university representatives will mix and mingle with students to answer questions and offer advice. Alumni association representatives and guests planning to attend are Sarah Blaney, Kansas Honors Program coordinator; Mike Davis, senior vice president for alumni programs; Heath Peterson, director of Kansas programs; and Jamie Winkelman, alumni programs coordinator.

For more information or to make reservations, visit www.kualumni.org, call the KU Alumni Association at (800) 584-2957 or e-mail kualumni@kualumni.org.
Once again, a so-called critical "deadline" has come and gone without any action in the ongoing medical facility civil war and double-talk exercise involving Kansas University Medical Center, KU Hospital and St. Luke's Hospital. ...

St. Luke's would get the KU brand for many of their doctors, the KU Medical Center would transfer several programs to St. Luke's, and KU Hospital would provide a number of medical residents to St. Luke's.

The KU Medical Center and KU Hospital would not get anything.

St. Luke's and several Kansas City civic leaders set the first deadline for early this past January. Next, the date was moved to early February, when the Kansas and Missouri governors were supposed to meet in Kansas City, shake hands and say nice things about the agreement. That deadline also was missed and set back to March. Then there was the just-passed May 31 date and still no agreement. Now they are talking about late June. ...

What seems very clear is that KUMC officials, and probably St. Luke's officials, now have decided to wait until Irene Cumming, the current president and CEO of KU Hospital, leaves for her new job in Chicago before they get serious about any negotiations. ...

St. Luke's wants everything; KU gets little if anything in return. KU Hospital officials are not going to give away the store. ...
Bleeker honored at KU

Jenna Bleeker, junior theatre and film major, Mankato, was one of the outstanding students in the department at University for Kansas who was honored with awards and scholarships recently. Bleeker received the Kari Wahlgren Theatre Scholarship. She is the daughter of John and Jeanne Bleeker, Mankato.
By Kay Richter

Seems like a long time since I last worked on the Assaria Community News! I think it's because with the early deadline last time, being on a Friday instead of a Monday those extra days make a difference. We have had several more rains since then too. We went to the Bennington Rodeo on last Thursday night, May 31, and it started to rain about halfway through and we left for home and it poured so hard we couldn't see to drive. I don't like that! Reports are another ¾ inch of rain.

Kenny & Linda (Bodwell) Leander have taken their lives down a new path with their marriage on May 18 and everyone is invited to celebrate this joyous occasion by attending a “Come & Go” Get Together at the Assaria Park Shelter on Sunday, June 10 at 2:00-4:00 p.m. The couple request no gifts, please! Bring your lawn chairs!! This party is hosted by the Assaria Lions Club, Assaria PRIDE, and the Deborah Group of Assaria Lutheran Church. This is a chance for the whole community to stop in and give this couple a big congratulations and wish them well!!!

Willard R. and Mickey L. Tumbull of Assaria will celebrate their 40 wedding anniversary with a 2 to 4 p.m. open house Saturday, June 9, at Assaria Lutheran Church. All friends and relatives are invited. They request no gifts. Hosts will be their children: Gwen Tumbull and Scott of Gypsum, Ward and Cinnamon Thmbull of Abilene, and Patty Young and David of Salina. They have five grandchildren. Willard and Mickey L. Smith were married June 11, 1967, in Clay Center. They live near Assaria. Congratulations and Best Wishes to this couple! Mark your calendar and plan to attend.

This isn't just any old garage sale, it's the Assaria Community Wide Garage Sale!! This year Sunny Slope is joining in on the fun, so be sure to shop both locations. It will be held on Saturday, June 16th at 8:00 am to 1:00 pm. There will be many sales including several multi-family sales. Maps will be available. You folks having a sale please pay your $1.00 and get your name and address on Carol Plymell or First Bank Kansas in Assaria before Tuesday, June 12 to get your name and address on the map and to help with the advertising.

This has always been a very popular event so plan to take part in it by having a sale or shopping around at all of the many sales that will be happening that day.

Volunteers are needed now for Greensburg and surrounding areas!

All groups and individuals must register with Americorp at 314-313-4779. Americorp will schedule and match skills to jobs. You will receive identification at the volunteer reception center at the east end of Greensburg. Without proper identification you will be arrested in Greensburg.

All volunteers need to download registration forms from www.ksvoad.org.

Respiratory masks are required and available on sight. No one with serious health issues should volunteer.

Working age limit is 18 if without a guardian. Working age of children (13 and above) with parents. Youth groups can register with a 1 to 4 ratio of adult to youth. Release forms are available on the www.ksvoad.org website and should be completed before arrival.

Anyone needing work done should contact Americorp at 314-313-4779. Americorp is handling all work orders for Greensburg and the surrounding areas.

No donations of goods are being accepted at this time.

Financial contributions may be made through Central States Synod, noting “Central Kansas Tornadoes” or through Lutheran Disaster Response (LDR), online at www.clea.org/disaster or by mailing a check. For LDR contributions, please indicate “Kansas, Great Plains Tornadoes.”

Central States Synod
3210 Michigan Ave. Ste. 400
Kansas City, MO 64109

ELCA Disaster Response
P.O. Box 71764
Chicago, IL 60694-1764

Harvey and Nathalie Morrical went to Blue Springs, MO on Saturday, May 19 to visit Elizabeth and Nakari Morrical. On Sunday afternoon they all went to Plattsburg, MO for High School Commencement for Jamie Irene McCormick. They returned home on Monday evening.

Reva Rundquist recently attended graduation for two of the Rundquist’s granddaughters. Gretchen Holthous graduated from Salina South High School and Kari graduated from Kansas State University.
School and will be attending Wichita State in the fall. Her plans are to study Clinical Psychology.

Genevieve Boyle graduated from KU in Lawrence with a degree in Art History. She plans to return to KU to study for her master's degree.

Ralph and Reva Rundquist celebrated their 59th wedding anniversary with their family Saturday evening, June 2 with a lovely dinner party.

Since the early 1800s various groups have observed a day to display the American flag. President Woodrow Wilson (in 1916) and Calvin Coolidge (in 1927) issued proclamations marking June 14 as National Flag Day. But it wasn't until August 3, 1949, that Congress approved June 14th as a day of national observance. President Harry Truman signed it into law.

The American flag has changed designs more than any other flag in the world. In fact, the United States didn't have a standardized flag until 1912! And even after standardization, the flag changed three more times with the addition of new stars representing new states.
Amy LaGesse was among graduates at the University of Kansas School of Pharmacy who participated in a recognition program and hooding ceremony on the Lawrence campus May 19.

She graduated from KU with a Doctor of Pharmacy degree.

She is the daughter of John and Diane (Binns) LaGesse, Newton. Her grandparents are Warren and Norma Sherwin and the late Jim Binns.

Amy is employed by Walgreens in the Phoenix, Ariz., area.
150 KU students recognized at honors program ceremony in Lawrence

LAWRENCE — The University Honors Program at the University of Kansas will commend more than 150 graduating students at a ceremony on Saturday, May 19, 2007 at the Crafton-Preyer Theatre in Murphy Hall.

The ceremony recognizes KU seniors who have completed the University Honors Program and the University Scholars Program, a mentorship program students participate in during their sophomore years. During the ceremony, students will receive gold cords to wear during commencement activities.

Joseph Steinmetz, dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, and Kathleen McCluskey Fawcett, senior vice provost for academic affairs, welcomed the students and their guests. Tom Heilke, associate professor of political science and associate dean of international programs, will address the graduating University Scholars. Heilke was instructor of the Scholars Seminar in 2003.

Christine Knudsen of Geneva, Switzerland, a 1991 honors alumna who is receiving KU’s Distinguished Service Citation on May 18, addressed the students. Knudsen is an adviser in the Displacement and Protection Support Section of the United Nations.

After the ceremony, a reception will be in the courtyard of Murphy Hall.

Students participating in the honors ceremony include those who graduated in summer and fall 2006 and those who will graduate in spring 2007. The university’s formal commencement takes place at 2:30 p.m. Sunday, May 20, in Memorial Stadium. Nearly 4,000 students are expected to attend.

University Honors Program students must complete a freshman tutorial and a combination of honors courses and out-of-classroom experiences such as study abroad, internships, community service or undergraduate research to graduate from the program. Students must also maintain a minimum 3.25 grade-point average.

Located in Nunemaker Center, the program provides staff to advise honors students regarding academic opportunities at KU. Honors students may enroll in honors courses, which are small, discussion-based and emphasize writing and research.

Honors students are encouraged to participate in cultural and social activities as well as community service.

Honors students also are encouraged to work on research projects and to apply for scholarships, internships or fellowships. Each year, undergraduate awards are available through the University Honors Program, providing funds for research projects conducted with a faculty mentor. Students compete twice a year for these undergraduate research grants.

The graduating honors students represent 29 counties in Kansas, 11 other states and one other country.

Students from the area include: Ingalls; Kelsey Lynn Gerber, daughter of Brent and Marla Gerber, English BA senior University Honors Program Cord Ingalls High School, Ingalls.
New area KU students invited to attend Jayhawk welcome picnic

LAWRENCE — New University of Kansas students and their parents from Anderson, Franklin, Linn and Miami counties will be welcomed into the KU family at the Jayhawk Generations Welcome Picnic at 6:45 p.m. Thursday, June 7, in Ottawa.

The KU Alumni Association and its East Kansas chapter will greet the next generation of Jayhawks at a picnic in their honor at Driver’s Sports Cafe, 222 East Logan. Area alumni, new students, students interested in learning more about KU and parents are invited to attend and enjoy complimentary food and beverages. Each new Jayhawk will also receive a free T-shirt.

Those invited to attend from area high schools include:
- Anderson County High School - Shelby Kueser, Kassidy Spring, and Brittany Surls.
- Central Heights High School - Chris Weber.
- Crest High School - Gary Briggs and Caitlin Bubna.

Board members Christy Barney of Louisburg, Bob Micholson of Paola, Marg and Charlie Porter of Ottawa, Steve Rottinghaus of Wellsville and Becky Thomas of Baldwin City, as well as Jennifer Alderdice, director of student programs for the KU Alumni Association, are coordinating the event. Association staff will arrive with the signature KU trailer full of grills, burgers and brats for the festivities. Current KU students, alumni and university representatives will mingle with students to answer questions and offer advice.

Alumni association representatives and guests planning to attend are Alderdice and Sarah Blaney, Kansas Honors Program coordinator.
Meagan Wilson selected for Leadership Institute

Meagan Wilson, a junior at La Crosse High School, has been selected to attend the second annual “Youth Civic Leadership Institute” at the Robert J. Dole Institute of Politics.

The Dole Institute of Politics at the University of Kansas has scheduled the event for July 11-13. Over 50 incoming seniors from high schools around the state have been selected to spend three days and two nights at the university engaged in a program designed to foster appreciation and involvement in public service. The program will consist of a variety of speakers, outings, workshops and brainstorming sessions all centered on the concept of encouraging interest in civic engagement. A highlight of the program will be a visit to the State Capitol in Topeka.

Meagan was nominated by LHS counsel, Warren Sager for the leadership qualities she has exhibited during her past three years at LHS.

She is the daughter of Ross and Cindi Wilson of LaCrosse and the granddaughter of Julia Chambers and Ray and Rowena Wilson of Jetmore.

Meagan has recently participated in the Kansas Lions State Band in Hutchinson, and will travel to Chicago the first of July to perform with the Kansas Lions International Band.
Student participate in special spring break

Garden City High School graduate Megan Nelson, who now attends the University of Kansas, spent her spring break in Salt Lake City, Utah, on an alternative spring break service-learning project.

Nelson worked at TreeUtah, an organization that oversees tree plantings at sites throughout the state and educates the public in tree stewardship.

The student-run KU alternative spring break program is designed to give students an opportunity to make service a part of their university educational experience.

Participants are required to attend the special projects in the community course, and if they complete all the requirements, they earn two hours of college credit.

Nelson is a senior at KU majoring in community health. She is the daughter of Mark and Clarice Nelson of Garden City.