

January 23, 2012

LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE REPORT

A Legislative Committee meeting was held on Monday, January 23, 2012 at 9:00 a.m. in the County Administration Building, Quorum Court Meeting Room, 215 East Central, Bentonville, Arkansas

Committee Members Present: Douglas, Moore, J. Harrison, Sandlin, Allen
Absent: Blaty

Others Present: Senator Cecile Bledsoe, Representatives Debra Hobbs, Mary Lou Slinkard, and Tim Summers, JP's King, Winscott, Hawkins and Curry, County Judge Bob Clinard, County Clerk Tena O'Brien, Assessor Glenn "Bear" Chaney, County Attorney George Spence, Comptroller Richard McComas, Administrator of General Services Elizabeth Bowen, Administrator of Public Safety Marshal Watson

Media: Tom Sissom – Daily Record

JP Douglas called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

JP Douglas stated that the meeting was informal and is to promote the discussion of issues between county government officials and state lawmakers. He stated as we go through the year we find things that affect our county government operation, and that these issues can only be solved through our Legislature in Little Rock.

BENTON COUNTY QUORUM COURT LEGISLATIVE ISSUES

County Attorney George Spence stated that he had prepared sample bills on five topics, some of which he characterized as "home rule".

1) An Act to Amend §14-22-106 of the Arkansas Code to Allow an Additional Exemption from the County Bidding Requirements.

County Attorney George Spence stated this addresses bidding requirements for counties and would give the county government powers already possessed by cities or school districts. He stated that two bidding exemptions have been added, number twenty two (22) an exemption that exists for cities and twenty three (23) one that exists for school districts. He stated that the county is trying to obtain more flexibility with how the county purchases items, and do away with some of the formalities.

Proposed changes to Act §14-22-106 of the Arkansas Code; (22) Goods or services purchased where the Quorum Court has by resolution waived the requirements of competitive bidding because the Quorum Court has made a determination that competitive bidding is not feasible or practical or is otherwise determined by the Quorum Court to not be necessary; (23) Goods or services available only from a single source.

Representative Mary Lou Slinkard asked if there are were certain services that would not come under this exemption; it just says goods or services.

County Attorney George Spence stated goods and services are commodities as defined in the statue elsewhere.

Representative Tim Summers asked does the county not have an ability now to waive bidding under certain circumstances.

County Attorney George Spence stated there is a provision which allows for a waiver of bidding in an emergency circumstance, but there is not a general waiver as there is for the cities.

County Judge Bob Clinard stated that in the last sixty days 60 that he had signed two court orders to waive the bidding process for equipment for CENCOM, and the Sheriff's Department, and that this bill would make it broader than just an emergency.

County Attorney George Spence stated this would allow the Quorum Court to make a decision. This is "home rule", it's about letting the country through their elected representatives make decisions, about what the county is going to do, and that the cities already have that ability.

JP Douglas questioned why the cities have the ability to do this and not the county.

JP Allen stated that he was favor of this, and that thinking on the pros verses the cons, that on the cons side of this, we want to make sure that this is something that could be good forever, after we are all gone and someone else is in our position and make sure that we can't craft requirements, that if someone wanted a particular vendor to get a certain product that we can't craft it or so narrowly defined that it is the only one provided that can do that, that is the big concern, because we have so narrowly defined what that is. He added that he is in favor of this, because he thinks that it works, but just because the cities are doing it, doesn't make it right.

County Judge Bob Clinard stated that he adheres to competitive bidding on every chance there is a possibility, and that he does not like single source, that is just an open invitation to pay more money. He added when we buy goods and services whether it be the judge's office, CENCOM, Sheriff's Department or whatever we need to look down the road and to try to find competitors, and that will get the best price in the long run. He added that he does not agree with single source, but that he does agree with this law and that it is a good law. He stated that it will say by resolution that the Quorum Court

is going to put forth this particular product to waive competitive bidding, that it not a blanket.

County Attorney George Spence stated it would be on a particular item that would arise that either a department or the county judge or perhaps one of the other elected officials would come and ask that we waive bidding, and to explain to the Quorum Court to get approval.

JP Douglas asked the representatives to give their concerns and if there is a possibility of getting this bill changed.

Representative Tim Summers stated that it could be a possibility, and that all of the Representatives and Senators would sign on to it, but to keep in mind that the audit function would protect some of these areas. He added that one of the challenges as a county is that he did not feel like that the county gets the help out of the Arkansas Association of Counties, that the municipal league is much stronger. He added Benton County has to start making more noise with the Arkansas Association of Counties, they do a very good job with the Elected Officials but that is about the extent of their scope. County Attorney George Spence stated that we are conscious that these all need to be submitted to the Arkansas Association of Counties.

2) An Act to Amend §20-13-305 of the Arkansas Code to Allow for an Alternative Method of Disbursement of Service Charges for Emergency Medical Service Districts.

County Attorney George Spence stated this proposed change would amend the method by which emergency medical service districts are reimbursed. He stated working with NEBCO that he learned that the Volunteer Fire Department receives their fees as collected with the taxes that are paid to them directly, and that this allows the Quorum Court the option of allowing the EMSD funds to be distributed in the same way as the fire funds. He stated this is not something that is required but in a “home rule” kind of way we are giving the Quorum Court the right to authorize the disbursement of service charges.

Representative Mary Lou Slinkard stated if this law is passed, it only affects Benton County right now the way that it was explained, and that she wondered if they could have the Arkansas Association of Counties to check with other counties, and see how other counties would perceive allowing this, or how many do this.

County Attorney George Spence stated this doesn’t change anything, except that if there is an allowance for a Quorum Court to take action, it is not going to change anything unless it is followed by The Quorum Court taking some action.

Proposed changes to Act §20-13-305 of Arkansas Code; (2) If the voters of an Emergency Medical Services District have approved the collection of service charges by placement of those fees on the ad valorem tax notices, and if the Quorum court by resolution determines that the annual cost of providing emergency medical services to

the District exceeds the annual amount collected as services charges through the placement of such services charges on the ad valorem tax notices, the requirement of accounting for the funds as described in subsection (d) (1) may be dispensed with by the Quorum Court allowing such fees to be distributed directly to the service provider selected for the District in consideration of providing emergency medical services to the District.

3) *An Act to Amend §14-14-813 of the Arkansas Code to Provide an Alternative Method for Counties to Recover Costs Related to Remediating Unsanitary Conditions.*

County Attorney George Spence stated this would allow counties to recover the costs of cleaning up property cited for unsanitary conditions by placing the expenses on the property owner. He stated this provides that if the county is out costs as far as doing some remediation of property out in the county that they can put those costs on the tax bill, if the county gives notice to the property owner and a hearing is held before the Quorum Court, and that this gives the property owner a chance to come in and object. Representative Tim Summers asked what about a case where somebody is the landlord and maybe it's a Meth house or the renters just absolutely are not taking care of it, will all of the responsibility fall on the landlord and none on the tenant.

County Attorney George Spence stated that the responsibility falls back to the property owner; if you contract with somebody and let them on your property, you could have some liability. He added this was not specifically addressed to houses where methamphetamine is being cooked, that this is broader.

JP Douglas stated this goes back to the nuisance ordinance in Benton County which allowed unsanitary or unsightly conditions and the property owner does not clean it up, after they have been given a citation, then the county goes in and has to spend money to clean it up. He stated that currently a lien can be filed but that doesn't do any good until the property has been sold, it is not fair to the taxpayers to clean up someone's property and not recover costs.

Senator Cecile Bledsoe stated that she wondered about absentee owners and if the county would go to a great extreme to make sure those absentee owners are notified in a timely manner. County Attorney George Spence stated that there is a requirement of notice and that the notice provision is not re-created it's the notice provision that is in the existing statute. He added all we have done is to say that when a copy of the notice is given to the landowner in the same fashion that it gives the property owner an opportunity for a hearing.

Representative Tim Summers asked about a situation on the lake where there were several mobile homes that were basically abandoned, that had trees growing up through them, would this address that situation. County Attorney George Spence stated that he was familiar with that situation in general, but that they did not know if this was broad

enough to get to that situation. He stated this bill would not expand in anyway what the county has the authority to go there and address, that is already in the statue. He added all that this would do is give the county an alternative method to collect the costs that it expends on going out and doing something that they are already authorized to do.

Representative Mary Lou Slinkard stated under current law, it says that the notice should be mailed by the County Clerk or other person, but it doesn't say anything about the Quorum Court. Is that something that we need to clean up since the County Clerk doesn't have addresses of real property owners that it comes from the county Assessor? County Attorney George Spence stated that as far as getting the notice out, that the Quorum Court is going to be very conscientious that the property owners get their notice to come to those hearings, and that he thought that the County Clerk, may be involved, but in this case it would be the county Environmental Department.

JP Allen stated that there are a lot of absentee owners, that may have the best intentions, and that it is going to get costly, and would like to make sure that they do the proper investigation as to getting the best possible address, or however to reach these people, because he doesn't want to punish somebody if someone somewhere else has dumped on their property and then just because we made one effort to put something in the mail and that didn't get to them, and they are all of sudden out some money.

JP Douglas stated that the property owner should know before the county cleans up their property. JP Allen stated that doesn't mean that we should take lightly in notifying them, and that there is something called due process and that we need to be very sensitive to that and make sure that it is right. He stated that 50% of notices sent out, never make it to the property owners.

County Attorney George Spence stated that the notice provision could be improved in a couple of ways; a longer notice provision, that could say 30 days or some other, or require that the notice be sent by some specific sort of mail.

JP Allen stated that he was not trying to defend any negligent behavior on a property owner, that they need to step up and manage their property and take care of it, but for those that are inadvertently in violation, we need to protect those people.

JP Sandlin stated that in the existing code in section (c) it shows at that point in time, prior to what we are requesting, is a thirty day notice, they have already had a thirty day notice in regards to the situation, and then only in the costs that is being accrued by the county would be the additional ten (10) days.

JP Allen stated this all looks good and that he was in support of it, he just wants to make sure that we do our homework to contact the person.

Representative Mary Lou Slinkard asked if there were specific requirements, and how a Quorum Court handles a public hearing.

County Attorney George Spence stated usually if there is a public hearing, it's described in the individual statute, if the public hearing needs to be done in some particular way.

He stated the main thing that the Quorum Court is focused on is being able to recover

these expended costs through the tax bills. He added if the Legislature is more comfortable with a thirty day notice or wanting to say certified mail, or its equivalent that the Quorum Court would not have any difficulty with that, the Quorum Court just wants to be able to recover the costs expended by the county.

Proposed changes to Act §14-14-813 of the Arkansas Code; (3) Provided that the amount is approved by the Quorum Court by resolution after a public hearing, any unpaid cost incurred under subdivision (c) (1) of this section shall be added to the ad valor tax bill of the subject real property. Notice of the hearing shall be made to the property owner at least 10 days in advance of the hearing in the manner provided above. The tax collector shall not accept payment of the ad valor taxes for the property unless the cost charged hereunder is paid at the same time.

4) An Act to Amend §12-42-111 of the Arkansas Code to Give the Authority to set up County Inmate Work Programs to County Sheriffs and to Designate the Entities for Which Such Labor May be Utilized.

County Attorney George Spence stated this relates to the use of county inmates to do work around the county, and that Representative Summers had sent him a bill that was drafted by the Legislative assistants in Little Rock to address some of this and that this varies from that a little bit. He stated that the bill sent out by Representative Summers addressed allowing the inmates being used for not for profit labor organizations and also moves the responsibility from the County Judge to the Sheriff, who is really the one that is overseeing the inmates. He stated the statutes about this was originally written as far back as 1870's and 1880's and before Amendment 55 things were done different in the county, and some of those were assigned to the judge and this really puts them where there actually being exercised. He added that the bill also makes it very clear that any governmental organization of the current statute limits it to county, city or incorporated town, and we have added school districts, the state, and any subdivision of the state and also provided for labor to be at non-profit charitable organizations.

Representative Tim Summers stated that the court needed to spend a little more time on this before they go much further. He stated that the original intent of this bill was to stop abuse by some county officials that used inmates on their personnel property and things of that nature, and to make sure this was in the best interest for the county, and that it is something worth study certainly.

County Judge Bob Clinard stated that this county judge and he did not think that there was going to be very many other county judges in Arkansas that are going to want to give up all of the say so of where these inmates may work. He stated the county has a \$10 million dollar budget in the Road Department and that he would certainly like to continue to be able to work with the Sheriff to use those inmates to the taxpayer's best interest, along with other departments that are under the county judge. He stated this Sheriff has cooperated, and has sent people almost every time that they have needed

them, when they were available. He stated that this changes that somewhat, because it gives all of the power to the county Sheriff and nothing to the judge and that he would not be in favor of that particular part of it.

Representative Debra Hobbs asked what the advantage of stipulating just the Sheriff is. County Attorney George Spence stated that the reason that was changed was from a practical point of view, that the Sheriff is who administers the program.

County Judge Bob Clinard stated that he had written a court order making the Sheriff the designated representative to administer this work force, which is the way that it ought to be, these are inmates in the protection and custody of the county Sheriff, and that is where they need to be. He stated his objection is that of the decision making process of where inmates work, not who they work for on a day to day basis, they need to be under the Sheriff and his Deputies, and by law he has to oversee those inmates, every minute they are in his custody.

County Attorney George Spence stated that there is two elements to this; (1) to clarify the language about where they can work, specifically with regard to non-profits, and as Representative Summers indicated that could be something that would come up for a lot of discussion, and (2) the other element is the element of leaving it with the county court or the Sheriffs Office.

Representative Debra Hobbs asked if a non-profit 501-(3) C needed to be designated. County Attorney George Spence stated that he had also discussed this with Washington County Attorney George Butler. He stated we are hesitant to do that because you sometimes get into organizations that need the help, but they do not have the 501-(3) C status, and you also get into the requirements of providing the paperwork and that sometimes gets in the way of things. He added that the Legislature may want to do that, but that he had decided not to put that in the bill.

JP Douglas stated it looks like that we need to take this back and rehash at least the first part of it.

Representative Mary Lou Slinkard stated this whole section of the law is all about compensatory time for inmates, and so the process belongs under the Sheriff's office about compensatory time, in her opinion.

County Attorney George Spence stated that the statute as it currently exists actually states that the judge sets up the program and authorizes who is going to supervise the inmates. He stated this changes the designation of supervision and who they can work for.

County Judge Bob Clinard stated that the county judges are going to want to have some input into where inmates work, not to oversee them, not to designate how many days or compensatory time. He added that they need to change the language to where the County Judge and the Sheriff are working together to determine where they are going to be working.

5) An Act to Amend §14-16-105 of the Arkansas Code to Allow Counties an Additional Method of Selling County Property.

County Attorney George Spence stated this allows for the County Judge to go before the Quorum Court to dispose of some pieces of property in this way, and if the Quorum Court by resolution approves it, then the county judge can go forward, and if it is being sold, then those proceeds go into the General Fund.

Proposed changes to Act §14-16-105 of Arkansas Code; (h) (1) In addition to the procedures described above, the County Judge of each county shall have power and jurisdiction to sell and cause to be conveyed any real estate or personal property belonging to the county provided such sale is approved by a resolution of the Quorum Court specifying the property to be sold and the consideration to be received.

(2) In the event of a sale of property pursuant to this subsection (h) the proceeds of such sale shall be deposited into the County General Fund

JP Douglas stated these are some of the issues that the Legislative Committee would like for our Legislatures to address.

Other Areas of Concern:

JP Douglas stated that the possibility of getting some of these done is probably rather remote, but still they weigh on peoples minds and the Legislative Committee feels like they need to at least bring them up and address them.

- a) County road taxes current state law provides for a 50/50 split distribution of county road taxes between counties and municipalities, except for municipalities that receive a special higher distribution rate. In Benton County three cities (Rogers, Bentonville, and Siloam Springs) receive 90% road tax distribution. We favor amending this distribution to create a more equitable funding for county roads.*

JP Douglas stated that it is the feeling of the court that this is a tremendous strain on our revenue stream, and that it's not fair to the county or municipalities that just get 50%, why should some get 90% and others 50% it's not really fair.

JP Curry asked how it came about that some cities get 90%.

JP Allen asked what was the mindset, and the rationale that changed this, is it because there is more traffic supposedly and more roads in the cities, or is it because they could and they did. He added it's one thing if they have a strong case to back up why they should have this but that he doesn't think that they can.

County Attorney George Spence stated the statute which provides for this going 90% to Rogers was enacted as far back as 1920's, and the statute that gives the 90% to Bentonville and Siloam Springs is a separate statute and it was enacted in 1963.

Representative Mary Lou Slinkard asked if there was any what to change the statute back, can we appeal that particular law.

County Attorney George Spence stated as far as any other options that is something that he would not be able to comment on, as he represents both entities.

JP Allen stated that the only thing that the county has that might possibly work against them is the municipal league and these cities, that the percentage is not consistent in the State of Arkansas.

County Judge Bob Clinard stated that it was his understanding that there are eight (8) cities that have other than the 50-50 split, but that they are not all the same. He added the statute that changed Siloam Springs and Bentonville was in 1963, and Rogers in the 1920's and that prior to 1963 and after the 20's that legislature passed a law that says you cannot pass special legislation to change something that has been set by a statute, and that was the case that was brought before the courts that special legislation created the 90-10 split from Bentonville and Siloam Springs.

JP Allen stated that it is one thing if they have a strong case to back up why they need such a disproportion of a share.

JP Douglas stated there is really no rhyme, reason, or methodology for figuring out how this split occurred.

b) A.P.E.R.S (The Arkansas Public Employees Retirement System) must be Reformed to make the system sustainable while providing a cap on the rate of funding that counties must contribute.

Representative Tim Summers stated that the rate for retirement has been increasing every year for the return on the stock market, and right now they project all the retirement funding at 8%. He added that he didn't think that the Public Employees Retirement System was sustainable for the long term future, but that it is fine for the next 20 years or so, and added we're talking about when 200,000 employees have retired, and that he believes that it is going to force the cities, counties and the state to look at contract employees, because of the costs of employees.

JP Allen stated that he did not see why the county should be mandated to fund the gap when the county is not going to get the benefit when it out performs the 8%.

Senator Cecile Bledsoe stated that Representative Summers had it right, that contract employees will be the answer in the future.

Representative Mary Lou Slinkard stated right now, employees are vested in retirement in five (5) years, and there has been some talk about extending that time.

County Attorney George Spence stated that there may be some federal provisions that say that you have to let them invest after a time, and that the five (5) years may be a federal requirement.

JP Douglas stated what we encountered in doing the county budgets, that it was at 9% and now it is at 13.4%, and that next year it is scheduled to go up another 1% and then

another percent the year after that. He added that with each 1% it costs Benton County in the neighborhood of \$300,000 a year, and that in a three year period the county will spend \$1.8 million on retirement. He stated that whether it is rising the retirement from 28 years to 32, or that Elected Officials get one year service for one year worked instead of the two. He added that after they get their service years in, they can draw their retirement, but if you go back to work for another entity that participates in A.P.E.R.S. you can get your paycheck for working but your not going to get your paycheck and your retirement both. He added there is no place else in the private sector that does that, and that it is time that the taxpayer's do not continue to foot the bill for extraordinary retirement that the majority of citizens don't enjoy.

Senator Cecile Bledsoe stated that fortunately she was not on the Retirement Committee, that that is a very difficult committee to be on. She added that every time that a change was not in favor of the workers in the state, and that then there is a committee room full of very upset people. She stated that they are going to have to start looking at a lot of things that have been said and that in the last legislature session they worked on the double dipping, and she totally agreed that that is one thing that needs to go away, and that the Retirement Committee is really going to focus on the double dipping. She stated that they depend on all of you to help them understand what is going on, so we will be available and really looking at some of those things, and it is really hard to know what to do at this point. She added that she did think that what Representative Summers said is a thing that people have looked at and that some of the places are going to have to go to contract workers, because then you don't have to pay money for insurance and other things.

County Judge Bob Clinard stated that he didn't think that it was legal to hire contract workers.

Comptroller Richard McComas stated that you can contract with the firm. He added that some of the changes have already taken place, and that now the county is required to pay retirement on people that have came back, and that started in July, and that we are already paying retirement on those people.

County Judge Bob Clinard stated a vast majority of our employees don't look at that 13, 14, or 15% retirement, as being that tremendously important, what they look at is their paycheck on Friday, so they can buy food for their family and put gas in their cars. He added that he would think there could be some sort of a savings or a type of compromise that could opt to say that they could take the retirement or a 5% increase in pay.

Senator Cecile Bledsoe stated she appreciated this information because it does help them and recommended that the committee have a meeting with Representative Les "Skip" Carnine who is the Joint Public Retirement and Social Security Programs chair.

c) Amend the act creating the District Court system to provide for the Public Defender to be provided and paid by the Prosecuting Entity.

JP Douglas explained that when there was Municipal courts the city paid for the Public Defender, when it went to the District Courts the municipality still provides for the Prosecuting Attorney, but they do not provide for the Public Defender. He stated that the Public Defender's work load increased so much, that the county had to fund another position for the Public Defender's office. He added when you look at fairness, that the municipality that is prosecuting, they are the ones collecting the fines and restitution, and that they should be the one who pays for the Public Defender.

Representative Mary Lou Slinkard stated that under the Administration of Justice Fund a report coming up is that funding that comes from the Administration of Justice fund are to go to the Districts Courts and that the Public Defenders are supposed to be included in that, but that their funding has now dropped, so they are doing a report to find out through the Administrative Office of the Court why these funds are not coming in and that is led by Justice Hannah. She added that the Public Defender has asked for this several times.

JP Sandlin stated that while the state may be responsible, they only fund "x" number of positions and that the county is getting to fund the Public Defenders, and that the districts and municipalities are getting the money. She added for the county to meet the demands made in the county, the county has picked up and funded additional Public Defenders so that the people will get the defense required by law. She stated the county needs more equity in the District Courts to help offset some of this expense. She added simply saying that the state is going to pick up the responsibility that they pick up a portion but they have never picked up full responsibility.

Representative Mary Lou Slinkard asked does it matter in District Court whether or not it is a city ticket, state ticket, or county ticket.

County Attorney George Spence stated that there is a statute that the court costs are divided up in a certain way, and that the fines go to the individual entities, it would go either to the county or to the city.

JP Douglas stated what is happening right now is that the Public Defender came before Quorum Court and said that there was a problem, in that the Public Defender's office has an increase in their workload, and that the cities are not doing it, but are getting the revenue from it, and said that if they don't there will be cases dismissed because of the lack of proper defense. He added that the cities should have to pay the Public Defender.

d) State should implement a step system to increase the rate of Reimbursement to counties for holding state prisoners, until the counties actual cost of housing inmates is recovered.

JP Douglas stated that currently that the state pays \$28 a day for housing state prisoners in county jails, and that they have been paying that rate since 1973, and that the counties cost for housing inmates is now around \$40, and that a step system to increase the rate of reimbursement for holding state prisoners should be made.

Representative Tim Summers earlier stated that in next year's budget that the amount that is for reimbursement has been cut and will continue to be cut, and that the state went from housing 1,400 prisoners in county jails to about 600, so you want to monitor that revenue stream very carefully. County Judge Bob Clinard stated that Representative Summers had stated that they were going to drop the number of inmates, and asked Richard McComas if that was what was allowed for in the budget for 2012. Richard McComas stated that reimbursement for the state had been dropped from \$2.017 million to \$1.750 million but that he did not think that was going to be enough.

e) Property Taxes should be collected in the year of assessment instead of in arrears.

JP Douglas stated that this is a constitutional amendment, there is probably not much chance but the committee feels like it would simplify and make the citizens life easier.

f) Election law reform should provide for no more than two special election days per year.

JP Douglas stated that there is something to be said to simplify things to where people will know on what day an election is going to be held, this year, next year, and the next year, we all know that the election is held on the second Tuesday of November. He added if special elections are needed, then break them up into a couple times a year.

JP Winscott stated that he didn't think that special should be in there, and that he thinks that we should have two elections every year, one in May and one in November. He stated that the county has got the message, that revenue is shrinking, and is projected to continue to shrink, and then you get these unfunded mandates, and 8-10 and as many as 12 Special Elections a year, that it is costly and not the right way to run a business.

Senator Cecile Bledsoe stated that in 1999 the Education Committee had a bill that was considered by the Legislature, which said if the schools were going to have an election it has to be at the same time of other elections. She added that created a lot of controversy and obviously it wasn't done. She stated that she definitely agrees, but getting it done is going to be very difficult.

Representative Mary Lou Slinkard stated that the question of changing the schedule of school elections, and only having two special elections a year, that if you have elections for special entities, school districts especially, that at primary election time it is almost impossible to have that many ballots styles out there, to get implemented so the voters would know where to vote, and what issue that they are supposed to be voting on. She stated that plus if the city calls an election on the primary election date that it is a special election on their question or measure, they are not paying their share of election like they would at a general election. She stated that school districts having their election on the date of the General Election that until school district boundaries are changed that can't happen, and we don't look for school district boundaries to change.

Senator Cecile Bledsoe stated that she didn't think that the citizens understand how expensive it is to hold an election.

JP Allen stated it is just not fair, look at the turnouts, that the biggest school district in the State of Arkansas is the Bentonville school district, and look how many people turned out for that election, it's ridiculous how low the turnout is. He stated that he was not picking on any one particular school district, that is just the way it is across the State of Arkansas, but it's stacked in favor of the school district getting what it wants. He added that there is a ton of reasons to have this changed.

Representative Mary Lou Slinkard stated that school district boundaries don't follow precinct or political district lines making it almost impossible to identify voters. She added this has been a great session and thanked the committee for doing this. She stated that they will be hearing on an appropriation bill this session from the Secretary of State Office that allows counties to apply for a grant through the Secretary of State Office to update and maintain the software and whatever else they may need for their election system, to allow the counties to update their election systems.

Richard McComas stated that Legislative Audit is going to change to a uniform accounting system by 2014, and asked if the county could be excluded from that change because it would cost the county one half million dollars for new software, and that we already have an accounting system that works for us.

Senator Cecile Bledsoe stated that she really appreciated the Legislative Committee holding this session, and that it was very informative.

JP Winscott thanked Senator Bledsoe and Representatives Summers, Hobbs, and Slinkard for attending the meeting.

JP Douglas stated that this is a work in progress and that the Legislative Committee is doing this to educate our Legislative Representative's and to educate ourselves.

After motion and second meeting adjourned at 9:40 p.m.