

Lawmakers divided

Continued from page 1A

“The fact of the matter is we’ve left on the table over \$4 billion that you, as taxpayers, have paid and other states are getting besides us,” said Fitzhugh. “There is a 16 to 19 percent reduction in the opioid problem in states that have expanded Medicaid. It would be the first, best and easiest thing we could do to help that problem because mental health coverage is included in that.”

Added state Rep. Paul Sherrell, “There is money there to help folks, but you’ve got to be a person that is willing to help yourself. I’m not a person that wants to give away. I want you to be a person that earns what you need.”

State Sen. Bowling opposes the expansion of Medicaid and explained that over 33 percent of Tennessee’s budget already goes to Medicaid and Medicare, which is TennCare. She said Tennessee has already gone well above the national average in what we allow for Medicaid.

“It is more important to get able-bodied people good-paying jobs so I think that’s the solution to helping people get insurance and taking the restrictions off of small businesses so they can provide again,” said Bowling. “I would not support the expansion of Medicaid because it is No. 1 on the budget. Education comes after TennCare. Our roads come after TennCare. Expanding Medicaid does not go to people who can’t help themselves.”

Another question asked by a number of people was concerning school safety. From arming teachers, to expanding SRO programs, to securing the

physical campuses, what steps do lawmakers feel are appropriate for the legislature to take to improve school safety?

Sherrell said he doesn’t know if anybody has the right answer, but he is in favor of arming teachers.

“There are teachers that are willing to go through the system and get qualified to be able to carry a gun,” said Sherrell. “If they want to do that, that would be fine with me.”

Fitzhugh disagreed with Sherrell adding he feels strongly that teachers should not be armed because, “We don’t want teachers to be policemen.”

Bowling suggested active shooter drills in schools, proactive law enforcement and more school resource officers. However, she noted some concerns regarding SROs.

“SROs are certainly good, but an SRO in uniform becomes a bull’s-eye so we need to make certain they are allowed to go in without the uniform on,” she said.

The Legislative Breakfast is designed to give local residents a chance to interact with the elected officials who represent them in Nashville. Bowling represents Warren County in the state Senate, while Sherrell represents about two-thirds of the county in the state House.

Judd Matheny, who represents about one-third of Warren County in the House, could not be in attendance. Fitzhugh was asked to attend to take his place. Fitzhugh is a Democrat from Ripley and does not represent Warren County.

The Legislative Breakfast will air on WCPI 91.3 FM on Thursday at 2 p.m. and Friday at 10:05 a.m. and 10:10 p.m.

Bernie Morris

Continued from page 1A

When asked about her proudest accomplishment while in office, Bernie reflected on technology. Even though she was initially paranoid of viruses or being hacked, she was able to implement a new computer system in 2014 along with selecting jurors through lists of licensed drivers.

“We are now scanning our legal documents as we go, which is a starting point and I knew that needed to be done,” explained Bernie. “In case of fire or bad storm damage, our records are backed up regularly and there are multiple ways of finding information, whether electronically or in our vaults.”

So what are Bernie’s plans for the future? She says she’s going to travel and work with her son at A&K Termite & Pest Control. She also plans on sticking around to help the new Circuit Court Clerk transition into his or her new role, which she explained was a courtesy extended to her when she

replaced Buck Vinson.

“I remember asking him when I started in 1994, ‘How do you remember all this?’ and he replied that he grew with it and I did,” reminisced Bernie. She shared some advice for the next Circuit Court Clerk, “Be prepared to work hard!”

For Bernie, she hopes that payment by credit and debit cards, which would generate more revenue, happens in the future.

Bernie says over the years, she has spent more time at work than at home. Her favorite part of the job has been the relationships she’s developed along the way with her co-workers, deputy clerks, and the entire judicial system, who have become “close friends and family.”

“Being the Circuit Court Clerk has been a blessing for me,” said Bernie. “I am thankful for the voters of Warren County for putting their trust in me and giving me this opportunity.”

Water Department may begin sending letters

By LISA HOBBS
Reporter for the Southern Standard
(McMinnville, Tennessee)

McMinnville Water Department customers could soon see a change in their billing, from cards to letters.

“I’m proposing to change our billing format,” said Water Department director Anthony Pelham. “DivCo Data is the company that West Warren and Warren County currently use. They have already bid this. It’s similar to your electric utility billing. It’s an 8.5 by 11 and it would come with an envelope that you can return back.”

Pelham says the reason for switching to letters is to prevent what is currently happening when the department’s cards take on the U.S. Postal Service’s card sorting machine and the machine wins.

“Here is something that commonly happens,” said Pelham, as he held up a stack of cards approximately an inch thick. “I have this stack

of card edges that are torn up in the mail’s card sorting machines. They then send them back to us saying they are non-deliverable. We are in the process of reprocessing their bills and remailing them back out.”

He says outsourcing the department’s billing service will free up manpower.

“To understand what we go through,” said Pelham. “We have 8.5 by 11 card stock. It’s perforated. Our staff breaks

them and rips them apart every card cycle. It’s 6,200 and some odd bills per month. They’ve been doing this forever by hand. It takes up, from the time we process the bill to the time they hit the post office, three days to generate those bills.”

Pelham says DivCo currently charges 11 cents per letter.

“The letter says 11 cents per letter, plus postage. We’re already paying postage for the cards, so net cost would be approximately \$10,000

to \$12,000 a year for us to go from card stock with all our labor and headache to 8.5 by 11 letters. The letter of authorization that I’m asking you to sign allows me to work on our graphics, our information and get to a master form. I would want this to take effect in July or August, after the next budget cycle.”

Committee members gave approval. Once the master form is complete, Pelham will bring it back to committee for consideration.

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Schedule

Friday, April 13

7:00 PM "Confronting Cultural Confusion"

8:00 PM "Glorifying God through Consistent Christian Living"

Saturday, April 14

10:00 - 11:00 AM "Are You a Person of Integrity?" Part 1 & 2

Lunch - 12:00 PM

Sunday, April 15

9:00 AM "Retaining Reverance for God In Disrespectful Times"

10:00 AM "Pressing toward the Prize"

For more information contact

East End Church of Christ at 473-2775