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JOHNSON REFLECTS ON 37 YEARS OF SERVICE
(By Nita Johnson)

Society has changed drastically in the last 30 years—with technology being one of the major advancements.

As Laurel County Clerk Dean Johnson fills his final days in the position he has held for 33 years, he credits technology as the most advantageous developments for his office operations.

When Johnson took office as clerk in 1986, he came from a four-year term as county treasurer. In both offices, most paperwork was done on typewriters—a business machine that is now nearly obsolete. But when the technology craze hit full force, the first aspect of the clerk's office was to have computerized vehicle tag registrations.

Another huge change came in the voter registration processes—due to technological advancements and the growth in population over the years.

“When I came in, there were only 26 precincts,” Johnson said. “We had those big voting machines that were the size of a refrigerator.”

Within a couple of years, however, the use of Microvote was created—the small blue “suitcase” style machine used to cast votes. “We’ve moved to the self contained machines now because of the ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) because all the machines have to be compliant with that,” he said. “The other machines were hard for people to use if they were in a wheelchair. With that, we had to relocate some of the precincts because some didn’t have handicapped access.”

Laurel County now boasts 45 precincts, all ADA compliant.

While Johnson said he hasn’t seen a huge increase in voter registration or turnout, he said the division from 26 precincts in the mid-1980s to the current 45 precincts does reflect on the county’s increased population.

“The precincts divisions are done by the population in the areas, not the number of registered voters in an area,” he explained. “And the population is always determined by the latest Census.”

He feels that the Laurel County Clerk’s office has always maintained a high level of integrity and efficiency dealing with the public for motor vehicle registrations, transfers, voter registration and election procedures, and maintaining the massive load of deeds, mortgages, and other legal documents that fall under the scope of that office. And Laurel County has excelled in being some of the first counties in the state to utilize technology to better serve the public.

“We were among the first counties in the state to create a computerized absentee ballot form. I worked with a guy to simulate the state forms,” he said. “Right now we have 44,000 registered voters in the county.”

The clerk’s office was also one of the first offices in the county to receive and use a FAX machine, he said, adding that the Laurel County Public Library was one of the first to offer the FAX service.

The growth in the county’s population over the past 30 years has massively increased the work load for those who serve in that office.

“When I came here in 1986, it was the 160th year of Laurel County being established,” Johnson added. “There were fewer than 200 mortgage books. Now we have approximately 1,200.”

While the workload of the deputy clerks in the office has increased to huge proportions over the past three decades, Johnson said the application of technological advancements has not caused a large increase in the employees needed in his office.

“When I started, there were 10 employees and now we have 18, so we haven’t had a big increase in the employees because of the computer systems,” he explained. “This office has come from a gross intake of \$8 million to \$15.5 million and we’ve never had a non-compliant comment in the 37 years I’ve worked for the county.”

Being the Laurel County Clerk required Johnson to interact with other clerks across the state over the years—some associations for which he said will remain dear to his heart.

“I built a rapport with other clerks and I was active in the Kentucky County Clerks’ Association,” he said. “I served one term as president.”

He has many other accomplishments for which he is proud—one of which is the efficiency of tabulating the votes on election night. With that process, the election officers returning their precincts totals are met at the back entrance of the Laurel County Courthouse and their equipment unloaded by persons approved by the local election commission members. The officers then carry in the case containing the printouts of the votes and sign in for their particular precinct, which are processed in the lobby in the ground floor near the Broad Street entrance. The printouts are then taken to the clerk’s office on the second floor where the employees of the clerk’s office then separate the documents and record the votes. Although the polls close at 6 p.m., most precincts have submitted their results and the final count is completed and reported by 7:30 p.m.

“I’m very proud of the efficiency we have on election night,” Johnson said. “That goes to the employees in this office and the state associations of elections for the efficient way we process the votes and the accuracy we have.”

As an example, Johnson reflected on the 2016 Gubernatorial race in which Republican candidate James Comer lost to now Governor Matt Bevin by a mere 83 votes.

“We had to do a re-canvas,” Johnson said. “That (statewide) re-canvas was completed on Thursday, with the result coming out the same, of course. We aren’t like Florida and Georgia, that took weeks to do a re-canvas. In fact, in national elections, Kentucky is nearly always the first to report their results.”

Johnson has also served as chair of the Laurel County Republican party, stepping down this year after four years in that position. He also has been involved with KACo (Kentucky Association of Counties) for 12 years, is a veteran, is a Shriner and member of the local masonic lodges.

His interest in being a public servant came early in his teens, being a President of his school’s Key Club and FFA (Future Farmers of America). He learned early on about working hard, and said he always had a drawing toward political issues.

“As a kid I liked to be active in things and I always liked being involved in politics,” he said. “There were two people in politics that I always admired—Boyd Boggs who was a county judge executive and later the sheriff, and Dwight Eisenhower. Those two had given a lot and I wanted to be able to help people. As the clerk, you are in the position to help people and I’ve tried to do that, not just with questions about elections or vehicle registered. Other people just come in and ask about different things and I always tried to help them the best I could. I leave here with a good feeling because I think I’ve done that.”

His political interests also brought him another accomplishment for which he is very proud.

“I was the Laurel County campaign chair and we brought George H.W. Bush to the

Bush community,” he said. “I was also the chair when George W. Bush and (former Governor) Ernie Fletcher came here.”

In fact, the shelves that line a section of Johnson’s office have a picture of the late president, George H.W. Bush, with Johnson when Bush visited the Bush Fire Department. Johnson laughs when looking at the picture now, saying, “My hair was a different color then.”

Johnson is also proud of his home county and of the many advancements that have come to the residents of this community.

“This county has been aggressive in growing and using its natural resources,” he said. “We’ve had good leadership and that continues on today. I hope we keep on and keep our best and brightest here and supply them with jobs so they can make a decent living and stay here.”

Johnson is also very dedicated in his church, Calvary Baptist, where he has served as the adult Sunday School teacher for several years. He stands true to his beliefs—even when that belief is not the most popular or “progressive.”

But his greatest accomplishment—and joy—comes from his daughter, Teresa, and his only grandchild, Rebecca. He looks forward to spending more time with them and his son-in-law while he continues to oversee the 175-acre farm where he raises cattle.

“I’m retiring as of December 31,” he said. “I’m going to go home and relax.”

S. 1

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President today I rise in opposition to S. 1. We should be working to reopen the Federal Government, not voting to infringe upon Americans’ First Amendment rights.

S. 1 is a package of four bills that were introduced during the last Congress. Three of the bills concern U.S. aid to Israel and Jordan, as well as sanctions against the Assad regime. They are noncontroversial, and I support them.

Unfortunately, the fourth bill, which is entitled the “Combatting BDS Act of 2019,” is so controversial that I am compelled to vote against the entire package before us tonight.

This Israel boycott legislation would encourage States and localities to restrict First Amendment protections for millions of Americans. It would do so by tacitly endorsing State actions to cut financial ties and terminate any government contract with anyone who engages in or supports boycotts of Israel.

My grandfather arrived in the United States as a stowaway fleeing the Polish pogroms, and my grandmother’s family fled Russia during the revolution.

As a young child during World War II, I came to view Israel as a symbol that never again will there be another Holocaust. My support for Israel isn’t about politics. It is about Israel’s right to exist.

I will always support a free and democratic Israel as the homeland of the Jewish people. That is why I have always voted to provide Israel the security assistance it needs.

However, my unwavering support for Israel does not override my support for Americans’ constitutional rights.

The right to free speech is the foundation of American democracy. Any legislation that encroaches on that foundation should be considered with great caution. I don't believe that has been the case here.

Federal courts have already ruled against similar laws regarding boycotts of Israel enacted by Arizona and Kansas.

In Kansas, the State legislature passed a law in 2017 requiring any individual or company that contracts with the State sign a certification that they are not participating in a boycott of Israel.

In Arizona, State law requires any company that contracts with the State to certify that it is not engaged in a boycott of Israel and that it will not do so in the future.

Federal courts in both States found that these laws raised substantial First Amendment concerns by infringing on individuals' right to political expression and issued preliminary injunctions blocking their enforcement.

Given the courts' rulings in Arizona and Kansas, I fail to see why supporters believe this legislation can be considered constitutional.

Equally alarming, the legislation would also apply to Israeli settlements in the West Bank, territory that Israel has never claimed as its own.

Today, there are more than 400,000 Israelis living on 132 settlements in the West Bank. Since President Trump took office, the Netanyahu government has accelerated the expansion of existing settlements, created new settlements and outposts, and taken steps to retroactively legalize settlements built on private Palestinian land.

Enacting legislation to stifle criticism of settlements on land beyond Israel's borders would set a dangerous precedent that would further erode our credibility as a neutral arbiter in the Middle East conflict.

Instead of wasting time on this unconstitutional bill, the Senate should instead focus on reopening the government by voting on the Federal funding package the House passed last week.

I fail to see why S. 1 should be a priority during the government shutdown. The Senate has a responsibility to uphold the Constitution and keep the government running. This bill does neither.

150TH ANNIVERSARY OF AUBURN, MAINE

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, today I wish to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the city of Auburn, ME. Auburn was built with a spirit of determination and resiliency that still guides the community today, and this is a time to celebrate the generations of hard-working and caring people who have made it such a wonderful place to live, work, and raise families.

Auburn was settled in 1786 and first incorporated as a town in 1842. The name was inspired by a popular poem

by Oliver Goldsmith that begins with this line: "Sweet Auburn! Loveliest village of the plain."

With the mighty Androscoggin River providing power, Auburn soon was home to many lumber, grain, and textile mills. When the factory system of shoe manufacturing was developed there, the people of Auburn formed a skilled and dedicated workforce that built a great Maine industry. The factories attracted many French-Canadian immigrants, whose culture continues to enliven the city. The prosperity produced by hard work and determination was invested in schools and churches to create a true community.

On February 22, 1869, the fast-growing community incorporated as the city of Auburn. Together with Lewiston across the Androscoggin River, an economic powerhouse was created, and the "Cities of the Androscoggin" today form Maine's second largest municipal region.

The decline of traditional industries in the 20th century posed a great challenge. Auburn's response is described in words etched into the walls of Auburn Hall: a Latin phrase that translates to "No Steps Backward." Auburn is a community that was built by the power of a great river. Now, the power of community is building a new future on that river with new economic opportunities, wonderful food, vibrant arts and entertainment, and exciting recreation. Auburn cherishes its history as it continues to move forward.

Auburn is a city of compassionate, involved people. It is home to the Good Shepherd Food Bank, the largest hunger relief organization in Maine. The Auburn Police Activities League, which provides educational and athletic opportunities to children and teens after school and during the summer, is an outstanding example of public officials and committed citizens joining together to change lives today to create the leaders of tomorrow. The energy and planning that are going into Auburn's 150th anniversary celebration demonstrate the pride residents have in their city.

The celebration of the city of Auburn's 150th anniversary is not merely about the passing of time. It is about human accomplishment. We celebrate the people who, from the dawn of our Nation to our time, have pulled together, cared for one another, and built a great community. Thanks to those who came before, Auburn, ME, has a wonderful history. Thanks to those there today, it has a bright future.

TRIBUTE TO MIKE DAVIS

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I would like to pay tribute to Mike Davis for his incredibly hard work on my Senate Judiciary Committee staff as chief counsel for nominations. He is an Iowan, so his work ethic should be no surprise, but he went above and beyond to ensure that the Senate con-

firmed a historic number of Federal judges during the 115th Congress, including the very difficult confirmation of Justice Brett Kavanaugh. In December, Mike spoke about his work for me to the Iowa Lawyers Chapter of the Federalist Society. I ask unanimous consent that the text of Mike's speech be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

KAVANAUGH AND BEYOND: JUDICIAL CONFIRMATIONS IN THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION

Good afternoon, everyone. Thank you to Sam Langholz and the rest of the Iowa lawyers' chapter of the Federalist Society for inviting me to speak today. The Federalist Society continues to perform the critical task of building the farm team of constitutionalist, originalist, and textualist lawyers across America who can go on to serve in senior government posts, including in the federal judiciary. Sam is no doubt one of those lawyers. I have known Sam for more than 20 years, from our college internship days in Washington. Sam is an exceptional lawyer and leader, and Governor Kim Reynolds and all Iowans are fortunate to have Sam serving as a senior member of the Governor's team.

I am completing my service as one of Senator Chuck Grassley's lawyers on the United States Senate Committee on the Judiciary, where Senator Grassley is finishing his 4-year tenure as the Chairman. In January, Senator Grassley is taking over the chairmanship of the Senate Finance Committee, along with assuming the constitutional office of President Pro Tempore of the United States Senate. As President Pro Tem, Senator Grassley will become third in line in the presidential succession, behind the Vice President and the Speaker of the House. It also means that Senator Grassley must have a protective detail, which he absolutely does not want. But as I remind him, the deer across Iowa can now cross Iowa's highways a little more easily without the fear of Chuck Grassley behind the wheel. At least for the next two years, anyway.

In all seriousness, I am very proud to work for Senator Grassley. He is 85 years old, and his health is excellent. His mind is razor-sharp. He remembers everything. He still runs several miles, several times a week. He still runs circles around his staff, especially me. In fact, the "Farmer from Iowa" schools me on the law, when I am supposed to advise him on legal issues. When he does this, I tell him that at least my jokes are better than his. He laughs. Sometimes.

Senator Grassley is one of the most kind, caring, decent people I have ever met. He comes home to Iowa virtually every weekend. He puts Iowans above all. And he will never become a creature of The Swamp, even after his 44 years in Congress. Yet Senator Grassley is one of the most—if not the most—consequential lawmakers in Washington. And his chairmanship of the Senate Judiciary Committee has been one of the most consequential in our nation's history.

In fact, earlier today, following Senator Grassley's dogged and determined leadership, Senator Grassley joined the President at the White House for the bill signing of the First Step Act—a once-in-a-generation criminal-justice-reform bill that Senator Grassley wrote and shepherded through Congress. No one expected this legislation to pass, let alone with overwhelmingly bipartisan support. Yet Senator Grassley is the one senator—with the experience, credibility, and trust of his colleagues across the political spectrum—who could have made this happen.