

LWVOK Convention Luncheon Speaker



David Blatt

Executive Director, Oklahoma Policy Institute

David Blatt helped found OK Policy in 2008 and became the organization's Executive Director in 2010. David's work involves conducting research, writing issue briefs and blog posts, and giving public presentations on state budget and tax policy, poverty, health care, and various other subjects. He writes a weekly column, Prosperity Policy, that appears in the Journal Record. David has been selected as Political Scientist of the Year by the Oklahoma Political Science Association, Local Social Justice Champion by the Dan Allen Center for Social Justice, and Public Citizen of the Year

by the National Association of Social Workers. David previously served as Director of Public Policy for Community Action Project of Tulsa County and as a budget analyst for the Oklahoma State Senate. He has a Ph.D. in political science from Cornell University and a B.A. from the University of Alberta. He lives in Tulsa with his wife, Patty Hipsher, a special education teacher in Broken Arrow, and their son, Noah.

Luncheon Topic: Can We Reverse State Question 640?

At the LWVOK advocacy summit in November of 2016, the LWVOK board and League members worked to identify our most pressing issues for 2017. When facilitator Sandy Bahan asked the group to name the one issue that stood in the way of turning around some of the issues identified by the group, such as Oklahoma's abysmal education funding, shrinking mental health funding, and overcrowded prisons, the group realized that the state's insufficient revenue doesn't cover core services, and the major roadblock was State Question 640, which makes it almost impossible to pass legislation to raise revenue in the state..

The League of Women Voters opposed State Question 640, a citizen-initiated ballot measure placed on the ballot in 1992. However, it was approved by 56% of Oklahoma voters. The measure amended **Article 5, Section 33** of the Oklahoma Constitution to add restrictions on how revenue bills can become law. Under SQ 640, a revenue bill can only become law if: (1) it is approved by a 3/4th vote of both legislative chambers and is signed by the Governor; or (2) it is referred by the legislature to a vote of the people at the next general election and receives majority approval.

Oklahoma Policy Institute notes that since passage of SQ 640, Oklahoma voters have approved only one state question to raise taxes: SQ 713, which increased the tobacco tax in 2004.

At its January, 2017 meeting, the LWVOK board voted to undertake an educational initiative on State Question 640. We will begin this process at the convention luncheon.