

This is the first in a series of articles about county government submitted by Supervisor Vicki Rowland to county newspapers.

September 27, 2005

By Vicki Rowland
Fayette County Supervisor

One of my goals as a candidate for this office was to increase communication. I envisioned a news column where county issues could be explained. I proposed the idea to Mike Kennedy and John Bunn, the other two supervisors, and we agreed to make this an open forum for all county officials to share information. Since I have a background in writing and editing, it was agreed at the September department head meeting that I will get the ball rolling and proofread and edit other's information if necessary.

What does a County Supervisor Do?

When I was asked to run for the position of supervisor, I did not fully know the answer to this question. In the past nine months I have learned a lot. And I continue to learn.

A county supervisor deals with many different kinds of issues. I made a list of topics we discussed on a recent work day and came up with twelve different issues. They ranged in nature from being mandated to spend \$330,000 on new voting machines to saving Fayette County hundreds of dollars by finding a new source for bandages for first aid kits.

We have perfectly good voting machines in Fayette County. Our auditor, Larry Popenhagen, has been ahead of his time by implementing electronic equipment in the Fayette County voting process. However, our machines do not meet the new regulations to make them handicapped compliant. Congress recently passed HAVA (Help America Vote Act), and to be certified for the next federal election, we have to buy new machines. To take some of the sting out of the mandate, the Federal Government (ie our tax dollars) is paying for about half of the cost. Nevertheless, this will still cost Fayette County about \$170,000.

Multiply this by the 99 counties of Iowa and the fifty states of the Union, and it is a very pricey ticket, coming to over twenty five million for Iowa alone. Could this money be better utilized?

We don't believe that not favoring these new HAVA regulations means being against handicapped accessibility. But we have not had complaints or concerns raised in Fayette County about being able to vote. One sight impaired voter recently expressed her opinion this way--"I'd rather have a job than a new voting machine." It's something to think about.

But Congress passed a law down to us at the county level--and therein lies the problem.

And what do supervisors have to do with band aids? In an effort to be OSHA compliant, departments in Fayette County have been ordering refills of their first aid kits from a supply company located near Des Moines. Their employee drives to Fayette County and stocks the first aid kits.. Last month the various tickets totaled over \$680. We can do better.

We pulled copies of the invoices and began an investigation. We researched the OSHA regulations, contacted our insurance carrier for insurance input, and the Public Health Department. Medical professionals met with the Board of Supervisors and are seeking a more effective solution in terms of cost and compliance. Ironically when Joyce Friederich of Public Health checked one of the recently stocked first aid kits--she found, among other wrongs, expired bandages!

The various challenges make for interesting days. We have to be creative and search for a solution that is "in the best interests of Fayette County." That is our guiding principle.

Well, that is enough for this time. Please feel free to contact your county supervisors with your questions, ideas and concerns. Our office telephone is 563-422-3538. Our mailing address is PO Box 267, West Union, IA 52175.