Ballard’s willingness to examine issues in depth makes her the better choice in 44th District race

Lawrence residents are lucky to have a choice between two qualified candidates for local office who are concerned with their community.

In the race for the Kansas House of Representatives in the 44th District, Democrat Barbara Ballard and Republican Sandy Praeger have emerged as outstanding candidates.

They share several views. Both women are pro-choice, support fee waivers for graduate teaching assistants and additional financing for the Margin of Excellence.

Praeger, a former city commissioner and former mayor of Lawrence, also has served as a member of the board of directors of the Lawrence Chamber of Commerce and as chairperson of the United Way of Douglas County.

Praeger wants to improve the education of children by identifying and helping at-risk students before they drop out of school and by using people in the business community to help educate students.

She wants to decrease our dependence upon property taxes by introducing other taxes. In addition, Praeger supports Gov. Mike Hayden’s proposal to finance the Margin of Excellence with increased alcohol and cigarette taxes.

Praeger said that promotion of recycling could help find more uses for recycled products, thereby helping recycling companies. The companies then could make recycling more convenient for residents. In addition, Praeger wants companies to find more environmentally friendly methods of packaging products.

Praeger’s other concerns include a Social and Rehabilitative Services task force dedicated to improving the organization’s efficiency, health care and aid for the elderly.

However, Ballard seems to be the stronger candidate.

Ballard has been a part of the University of Kansas since 1980. She currently serves as associate dean of student life and director of the Emily Taylor Women's Resource Center. She was inducted into the KU Women’s Hall of Fame in 1985.

Ballard received a bachelor’s degree in music education from Webster College in St. Louis. She received a master’s degree in counseling and guidance and a doctorate in counseling and student personnel services from Kansas State University.

In 1985, she was elected to the Lawrence school board for a four-year term and was elected as the first Black president of the board in 1987. In April, Ballard was re-elected for another four-year term.

Poverty and health care are Ballard’s main concerns. Without the hesitation typical of politicians seeking office, she said that money was needed to ensure a balanced budget for Kansas and tax increases were the inevitable way to generate new financing. Ballard favors increases in income and sales taxes.

Her stance on property taxes is her weakness. Ballard wants to scrap the current classification system, preferring instead to reach an unknown perfect solution to taxpayers’ anger about the latest change in property taxes.

Early education about recycling’s benefits would make recycling part of people’s daily lives, Ballard said, instead of a reaction after the fact.

Ballard’s passion for those who most need help from the Legislature is impressive. She cites the poverty-stricken as one of her main concerns. Poverty causes people to do without some necessities such as insurance and ultimately leads to crime and other social problems, she said.

But Ballard also understands that leaders from other areas of the state may not understand demands for more money to help the Lawrence community, and more specifically, KU. Those leaders need to be informed about what benefits money will bring to the Lawrence community, she said.

That understanding of the goals of leaders from other areas of the state, goals that often differ from ones expressed here, tempers Ballard’s passion and makes her willing to see the other side in an issue. That makes her the choice as 44th District representative.