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Our (select) choices for the primary

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STEVE HOWE, DISTRICT ATTORNEY: If you believe abuse of power is a means that justifies the end, then Phill Kline is your candidate. There are Third World countries where, in the name of justice, opponents are targeted without probable cause. If you think Johnson County, Kan., deserves better than that, then you want a professional prosecutor, Republican Steve Howe, who can go toe-to-toe with Democrat Rick Guinn in November, in a no-lose contest for this community.

FRANK DENNING, SHERIFF: In the 50-plus years this newspaper has been covering the Johnson County Sheriff's Office, Frank Denning ranks right up there at the top, with the likes of Fred Allenbrand, as someone who exhibits professionalism, is a no-nonsense law enforcement officer, and has demonstrated a key ability to work closely with all the chiefs of police to keep our county and all of our communities in safe hands.

STATE SENATE 8th DISTRICT: Longtime public servant Tim Owens, who is a state representative and a former Overland Park city councilman, is up against one of the all-time scariest politicians since Kerry Patrick (remember him?). That would be Ben Hodge, who was an embarrassment as a state representative and still is an embarrassment on the Johnson County Community College Board of Trustees. Owens would like to have you vote for him, not against Hodge, but that is nonsense. When an opponent is as bad as Hodge, voting against is just as valid as voting for Owens. Barbara Allen, who ruled this district until her recent retirement, deserves someone of Owens' caliber to follow her. If Owens gets outworked, Judy Macy is waiting in the wings in November to hold the fort.

STATE SENATE 10th DISTRICT: Nick Jordan is trying to move up to U.S. Congress and has left in his wake a state Senate hotbed vacancy, a classic battle between a moderate, Sue Gamble, and a very right-wing Mary Pilcher Cook. Cook's voting record as a former state representative leaves no doubt where she stands, which is much farther right than Jordan. Gamble, who served admirably on the state school board, would be a great addition to the Senate. Despite her reluctance to run on education as her platform, for fear of sounding like a single-issue candidate, the fact is, Sue Gamble would be one of the most experienced state senators in all of Kansas on the vital K-12 public education issues.

STATE SENATE 11th DISTRICT: State Sen. John Vratil is the best legislator in Topeka.

STATE SENATE 37th DISTRICT: Steve Baru, a longtime Sierra Club activist, doesn't stand a snowball's chance, even in global warming, of beating his Republican opponent, Jeff Colyer, a current state representative and darling of the right. But we have to give Baru credit for his guts. More than that, we give him our endorsement for one main reason. He would continue the fight against the proposed polluting coal-fired plants of western Kansas that promise to make our planet just a bit less habitable.

STATE SCHOOL BOARD: Admittedly, we do not know well either Republican candidate for this important office, vacated by Sue Gamble. Neither Brandon Kenig nor Mary Ralstin are likely to win us over, because their opponent in November will be one of our outstanding former legislators, Sue Storm. Of course, we cannot endorse Storm until before the November general election. We can hardly wait.

COUNTY COMMISSION: In case you are confused, unless there are more than two candidates in this nonpartisan election, there is no runoff until November. So, we will keep our powder dry for now on Dave Lindstrom vs. James Azeltine and John Segale vs.

Jim Allen, all worthy candidates. We almost forgot to mention the race against John Toplikar, who is the worst county commissioner to ever serve in that office. But that race comes in November, too.

LEAWOOD SALES TAX: Looking for a renewal of a one-eighth-cent sales tax for street improvement and storm water, one of this county's premier cities has proved it knows how to be the best. This is a small request to keep Leawood at the top.

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