Dear County Resident:

This letter is to provide facts to you concerning the EMS (ambulance service) referendum election called for February 11, 2014. You are receiving this letter because you are a registered voter of the affected area. There is conflicting information circulating about the election. You are encouraged to learn as much as you can about the measure from sources you consider to be trustworthy and to vote.

The election concerns an $85.00 annual fee to be imposed beginning in 2014 to assure ambulance service remains available in the unincorporated areas of Benton County. The fee will apply to each residential structure in the portion of Benton County which is not inside the city limits of any city or town, except that portion of the County which is within the Northeast Benton County Emergency Medical Service District (NEBCO-EMSD). If approved, the fee will be added to real estate tax bills and will be payable between April and October 15th each year along with real estate taxes.

The reason the fee does not apply to residents of cities and towns is that ambulance service for the cities and towns is paid for from the city or town budgets. The reason the fee does not apply to residents of the NEBCO-EMSD is that the availability of ambulance service for that area has been provided since about 1985 through a voter approved fee, which will be $100.00 annually for residents of that area beginning in 2014.

I would like to take this opportunity to provide a brief history of steps taken to address the continued availability of ambulance service in rural Benton County.

Historically, ambulance service has been provided to the unincorporated portion of the County (other than the NEBCO-EMSD) by municipalities, Bella Vista, Bentonville, Gravette, Rogers, Siloam Springs, Pea Ridge and Springdale. The County was approached by several municipalities in recent years concerning the County providing a subsidy for providers of ambulance services. The cities indicated that the reason they sought a subsidy was concern that there could be a legal challenge to providing services outside of their city limits without being fairly compensated for doing so. This resulted in initial subsidies totaling $100,000.00 in 2011, followed by $150,000.00 and $300,000.00 for 2012 and 2013, respectively.

To address this issue long term, the County commissioned a study to determine the options available. With the study in hand, the Quorum Court has considered the issue at numerous public meetings. Through these meetings, it became evident that service to the unincorporated areas may be jeopardized should the County not reach agreements with the current providers. After months of negotiations, the County reached agreements with

the providers as to future subsidies. The cost for 2014 is just over $950,000.00, and the costs are expected to rise to approximately $1.2 million by 2016 and then level off. The subsidies insure the service is available, but does not pay for all costs related to ambulance services. When a person actually requires an ambulance, the providers will bill the patient's insurance carrier, or bill the patient personally if the patient does not have insurance (which is the same as currently).

The subsidies for 2011-2013 were paid from the County general fund. Because of the ongoing drain on County resources, the Quorum Court undertook the task of determining a mechanism which would provide certainty with regard to the funding for this service. In September, 2013, an ordinance was approved assessing the annual $85.00 fee.

One question that has arisen is why the County does not simply provide these services by other means. After considerable analysis, the option chosen is the most economical one to provide the level of service currently being provided. The County looked at the option of establishing its own ambulance service, but to provide an equal level of service would cost considerably more.

The suggestion has been made that the cities are profiting from this arrangement. Considerable effort was spent to arrive at fair amounts to be paid to the cities for continuing to provide this service. The cities are not required to provide the service and the County is not required to use them to provide the service. In fact, under the law, the County is not required to provide emergency medical services at all. Right now, this appears to be the best option for continuing the current level of service, but the County will continue to look for ways to make this service available more economically.

The obvious question is: What happens if the fee is rejected at the election? While some of the municipal providers have indicated they would discontinue service, the answer to that question is uncertain. The proposed fee cannot be used for any purpose other than providing EMS services to the area for which it is approved. It would provide security to the citizens of unincorporated Benton County that they will continue to have access to this critical service.

Your vote for the referred ordinance supports the $85 fee and a vote against it opposes the fee. It is important that you inform yourself and please go cast your vote.

Sincerely,

Robert D. Clinard, Benton County Judge

See Other Side for Polling Locations, Dates, and Times

Early Voting Locations Dates and Times		
County Clerk's Office - Bentonville	215 E. Central, Suite 217 Bentonville AR 72712	Feb 4, 5, 6, 7, & 10 (8am - 4:30pm)
County Clerk's Office – Rogers	300 W. Poplar Street Rogers AR 72756	Feb 4, 5, 6, 7, & 10 (8am - 4:30pm)
County Clerk's Office – Siloam Spring	707 Lincoln Street Siloam Springs 72716	Feb 4, 5, 6, 7, & 10 (8am - 4:30pm)

ELECTION DAY VOTING LOCATIONS ON FEBRUARY 11, 2014
POLLS OPEN AT 7:30 A.M. CLOSE AT 7:30 P.M. AT THE FOLLOWING LOCATIONS.

PRECINCT (S)	POLL SITE	ADDRESS
1, 2 & 4	Gravette Civic Center	401 Charlotte Street SE, Gravette
3 & 50	Monte Ne Baptist Church	1610 Monte Ne Road, Rogers
5	Prairie Creek Association Comm Center	14432 E. Hwy. 12, Rogers
6, 7 & 15	Total Life Community Center	13710 S. Hwy . 59, Siloam Springs
8, 11, 16 & 17	Siloam Springs Community Building	110 N Mt. Olive Street, Siloam Springs
18, 19, 20, 39, 68 & 70	Cave Springs Community Building	117 S. Main, Cave Springs
22, 60 & 72	Centerton Fire House	755 W Centerton Blvd, Centerton
21, 23 & 25	Hiwasse Fire Station Community Bldg	13690 Fire House Lane, Hiwasse
30, 31, 32, 63 & 66	Bella Vista Church of Christ	989 NW McNelly Road, Bentonville
14, 28, 29, 33 & 58	1st Baptist Church of Pea Ridge	1650 Slack St, Pea Ridge
34, 36, 59, 61, 62 & 64	Bentonville Church of Christ	811 N Walton Blvd, Bentonville
12, 35, 41 & 53	Cornerstone Assembly of God	4055 N. 2nd Street, Rogers
45 & 51	Bland Chapel (Rocky Branch)	8530 Twin Coves Road, Rogers
48, 49 & 67	Lowell First Baptist Church	409 Johnson Street, Lowell
57	Hickory Creek Fire Station	15645 Hwy. 264 East, Lowell

If you aren't sure of your polling location, call the county clerk for your location. 479-271-1013.