

Special Government Section



Coke County Courthouse • Robert Lee

Coke County covers 928 square miles on the Edwards Plateau in west central Texas. The county was founded in 1889 and named for Richard Coke, the 15th governor of Texas. As of the 2010 census, its population was 3,320.

Several months ago, I posted the following statement on several pages frequented by Coke County residents on Facebook.

CITIZENS OF COKE COUNTY:

I need your input. For the last several weeks, I've been researching how our tax dollars are spent in Coke County and in other surrounding counties of similar size and population. I honestly didn't know how our tax money was distributed. After I looked at Coke County, I began to look at the other county budgets to see if they're in the same boat and how they are handling it. After I began to assimilate the research into comparison tables, I went to my most trusted advisors to get their thoughts.

They agreed that the research showed a number of astounding things and inconsistencies. However, they asked me why I was bothering. They said the majority of people these days didn't really care about anything that didn't affect them on a close, personal level. Is this true?

My plan was to combine all of my research into a magazine type special section. I was not going to hit our businesses up to support this section. I was going to fund the printing and distribution of this project.

Please let me know what you think. If the majority of responses to this are positive, I'll move forward. If the responses are negative or non-existent, I'll stop and figure my advisors are right. Please take the time to read this, share it and respond.

Thank you.

I was astonished by the number of positive comments urging me to move forward with this. However as you can see, I have changed it from a magazine-style insert to a middle section pull-out.

If you're a long-time reader of *The Observer/Enterprise*, you may already know my political leanings. My husband describes me of being "just right of Attila the Hun". I describe myself as a common sense constitutional conservative who believes in limited government (especially on the federal

level) and low taxes. I understand fiduciary responsibility, first to others as a realtor for several years and now to myself as a business owner. I feel that responsibility should be taken very seriously by those tasked with spending the people's money –tax dollars. Simply put, I would hope these people would operate in the most cost effective manner possible. On the national level, government spending has been out of control for close to 100 years. It's a little better at the state level – if that state is Texas. What this section will focus on is more local –county government.

A few people accused me of having a personal agenda. To be perfectly honest, my agenda in the beginning was to highlight the low salaries for the law enforcement professionals employed by the Sheriff's Office. But by the end of the first day of research, I realized that it wasn't just members of the Sheriff's Office that were under compensated. Every county employee was in the same shape, with the exception of the County Judge and the County Attorney who receive state supplements of \$15,000 and \$20,833 per year respectively in addition to their county salaries.

Instead of compiling the research into an article that could be considered biased, I will include tables with information taken from budgets of Coke County and several counties in our area with similar demographics. Following these tables will be a short summary with a few points to ponder. Since that first post on Facebook, I've been sent several articles, etc., that provide information on other situations we are facing. Even though they are not specific to county government, I feel they will be of interest to O/E readers. I have not included the cities of Robert Lee and Bronte, nor the hospital and water districts located within our counties in this section. Hopefully, they will be included in a future section.

Finally, I hope this section will provide information which will spur all residents of Coke County to take a greater interest in how each tax dollar is spent and what regulations are being imposed.