



P.O.V.

Season

17

Discussion Guide

# Bill's Run

A Political Journey in Rural Kansas

A Film by Richard Kassebaum



[www.pbs.org/pov](http://www.pbs.org/pov)



## Letter from the Filmmakers

LOS ANGELES, CA, 2004

### Dear Viewer/Colleague,

As is often the case with documentaries, I started out making a film about one thing, and it turned into something else. With *Bill's Run*, I wanted to make a film about politics and family tradition. When my brother announced his candidacy for the Kansas House of Representatives, he was about to follow in the footsteps of our grandfather and our mother, who had served as Kansas's Governor and U.S. Senator, respectively. For me, this raised many interesting questions about the nature of public service, including: Why would anyone want to run for public office?

As I followed Bill on the campaign trail, the answer quickly became obvious. Many of the small towns that make up his rural district are facing a problem endemic to much of the Plains: people are leaving, and a way of life—one that I had come to take for granted— seems about to become a nostalgic memory.

What will be lost if these towns die? I tried to answer that question by focusing on one town in particular, Burdick, located just two miles from my brother's farm. I became a regular at Burdick Oil gas station, where strangers like me were welcome to pull up a chair. Earl and his sons, Jim and Phil, made me feel like part of the family. Consequently, the film deepened and became much more than just a story about my brother's campaign.

Although the town exemplifies the bad times being had by hundreds of small towns throughout the Midwest, I hope viewers come away with a sense of the vitality that remains in places like Burdick. Its virtues may not jump out at you, but they are revealed, at their own pace.



Filmmaker Richard Kassebaum  
Photo courtesy of *Bill's Run*

*Sincerely,*

**Richard Kassebaum**



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## Introduction

When documentary filmmaker Richard Kassebaum heard that his younger brother Bill, a rancher and father of two, had decided to run for the Kansas House of Representatives, he left Los Angeles for Kansas and spent seven weeks on the campaign trail chronicling his brother's first run for public office. The resulting hour-long documentary, *Bill's Run: A Political Journey in Rural Kansas*, offers viewers an insightful glimpse into politics and local campaigning in the heartland.

- Bill's status as a first-time candidate raises questions about civic participation (or the lack thereof).
- Bill's decision to run in a primary against a four-term Representative and Majority Leader of the House provides an opportunity to consider the power of incumbents.
- Though Bill is a rancher and is depicted as a "regular guy," he is also a lawyer and a member of a political dynasty, raising issues about whether or not politics has become a profession inaccessible to the common citizen.

- Bill's struggle to balance his time between farm work, the campaign, and his daughter's 4-H project raise questions about what kinds of candidates are likely to be able to meet the demands of politics when they compete with the demands of family and work.

- Bill's focus on education calls attention to the disappearance of rural communities—the quintessential and stereotypical, if not actual, representation of American life.

- Bill's stance that government should increase taxes in order to adequately fund education focuses attention on divisions within the

Republican Party and debates about the appropriate scope of government.

- Conflicts over campaign strategy illustrate a son's need for independence, even as he carries on the family's tradition of service in public office.

Through these issues, *Bill's Run* becomes much more than an interesting story of one politician's candidacy.



Bill Kassebaum on horseback with his daughter Nellie on his farm in Burdick, Kansas

Photo courtesy of *Bill's Run*

Because of who Bill is and the political stands he takes, *Bill's Run* provides a springboard for communities interested in exploring a wide range of issues, including:



## Potential Partners

*Bill's Run* is well suited for use in a variety of settings and is especially recommended for use with:

- **Your local PBS station**
- **4-H Chapters or Cooperative Extensions**
- **Groups focused on any of the issues listed above**
- **League of Women Voters, MTV Rock the Vote, or other groups or campaigns working on civic participation**
- **Your local Board of Education**
- **Faith-based organizations**
- **Academic departments and student groups at colleges, universities, community colleges, and high schools**
- **Community organizations with a mission to promote education and learning, such as P.O.V.'s national partners Elderhostel Learning in Retirement Centers, members of the Listen Up! Youth Media Network, or your local library.**

## Key Issues

*Bill's Run* is an excellent tool for dialogue because it shows real people, with all their strengths and faults, and it avoids simplistic answers. The film will be of special interest to people interested in exploring or working on the issues below:

**Campaign reform**

**Civics / government**

**Democracy**

**Family values**

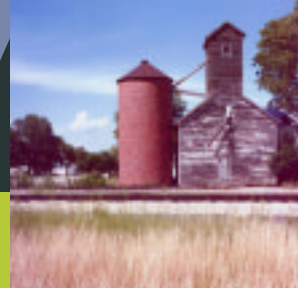
**Political science**

**Republican Party / conservative politics**

**Rural communities**

**School financing / education**

**Voter registration**



## Background Information

### People We Meet in *Bill's Run*



**Bill Kassebaum** — Bill, a lawyer and rancher, is running for the Kansas House of Representatives as a Republican in the 68th district. It is Bill's first run for office, though he comes from a political dynasty that includes his grandfather *Alf Landon*, former governor of Kansas and the 1936 Republican presidential candidate who lost to Franklin Delano Roosevelt, and his mother, *Nancy Kassebaum Baker*.



**Rep. Shari Weber** — Bill's opponent. A conservative Republican, Shari served eight years in the Kansas House of Representatives, the last two as Majority Leader. She now works as a lobbyist for a Kansas banking association.



**Earl Peterson** — Earl grew up in Burdick, attended Diamond Valley High (class of '42) and, with his brother *Wendell*, bought Burdick Oil in 1948. The Burdick gas station has been in continuous operation since 1913. Earl's sons, *Jim* and *Phil*, now own the station, but Earl continues to show up every day for work. Earl's cousin, *Oliver (Olie) Peterson* is also a Burdick Oil regular. Burdick counts on Olie to keep the town mowed during the summer.



**Nancy Kassebaum Baker** — a former senator from Kansas (1978-1997). Politically moderate, Nancy Kassebaum has often been at odds with the conservative wing of the party. She currently lives in Tokyo with her husband, Howard Baker, who is serving as the U.S. Ambassador to Japan.



The film also includes some of Bill's immediate family members: wife *Jennifer* (also an attorney and rancher), and daughters *Theo* and *Nellie*.



## Background Information

### The Town of Burdick & Changing Rural Life

In 1862, the Homestead Act helped populate the “frontier” by appropriating tribal territory and by allowing white Americans to claim title to 160 acres in return for a \$10 filing fee and a promise to improve the land. Twenty-eight years later the Census Bureau declared the frontier “closed” on the basis that most western counties had achieved population densities of six people per square mile.

Today, so many people are leaving the Midwest that the frontier is reopening. The *New York Times* reports that an area of nearly 900,000 square miles—equal to the original Louisiana Purchase—now meets the nineteenth-century Census Bureau definition of “frontier.” Some 261 counties on the Great Plains contain fewer than six inhabitants per square mile. Still, approximately 49 million, or 17%, of Americans live in what the U.S. government describes as non-metropolitan areas.

Burdick, the town closest to Bill Kassebaum’s ranch, was founded in 1880 by Swiss and German immigrants. Its close proximity to the Santa Fe Trail and fresh spring water attracted

early settlers to the area. Many current residents recall more vibrant times but acknowledge that lack of opportunity forces most of Burdick’s younger generation to move away in order to find employment.

Some residents mark the beginning of the town’s decline to the loss of their own school. Bill’s daughters, Theo and Nellie, take a 45-minute bus trip to Centre Elementary School in Lost Springs, a school created in 1958 after several area schools—including the school in Burdick—were closed and consolidated into one larger facility. In the last three years, three additional school districts in the area have been consolidated, an indication of continued population decline in rural Kansas.



Cows in winter on the Kassebaum Ranch in Burdick, Kansas

Photo courtesy of *Bill's Run*

### Election Results

In the final count, Bill won by 145 votes. In 2004, he drafted legislation that would raise student aid per pupil by \$100, while adding funds for bilingual education, programs for poor and minority students and districts’ special-education expenses. A coalition of Democrats and moderate Republicans joined forces to support the bill, which passed on a 72-52 vote. However, it has failed to pass the Senate.



## Using This Guide

**This guide is designed to help you use *Bill's Run: A Political Journey in Rural Kansas* as the centerpiece of a community event. It contains suggestions for organizing an event as well as ideas for how to help participants think more deeply about the issues in the film. The discussion questions are designed for a very wide range of audiences. Rather than attempt to address them all, choose one or two that best meet the needs and interests of your group.**

### Planning an Event

In addition to showcasing documentary films as an art form, screenings of P.O.V. films can be used to present information, get people interested in taking action on an issue, provide opportunities for people from different groups or perspectives to exchange views, and/or create space for reflection. Using the questions below as a planning checklist will help ensure a high quality/high impact event.

- **Have you defined your goals?** With your partner(s), set realistic goals. Will you host a single event or engage in an ongoing project? Being clear about your goals will make it much easier to structure the event, target publicity, and evaluate results.
- **Does the way you are planning to structure the event fit your goals?** Do you need an outside facilitator, translator, or sign language interpreter? If your goal is to share information, are there local experts on the topic who should be present? How large an audience do you want? (Large groups are appropriate for information exchanges. Small groups allow for more intensive dialogue.)
- **Have you arranged to involve all stakeholders?** It is especially important that people be allowed to speak for themselves. If your group is planning to take action that affects people other than those present, how will you give voice to those not in the room?
- **Is the event being held in a space where all participants will feel equally comfortable?** Is it wheelchair accessible? Is it in a part of town that's easy to reach by various kinds of transportation? If you are bringing together different constituencies, is it neutral territory? Does the physical configuration allow for the kind of discussion you hope to have?
- **Will the room setup help you meet your goals?** Is it comfortable? If you intend to have a discussion, can people see one another? Are there spaces to use for small breakout groups? Can everyone easily see the screen and hear the film?
- **Have you scheduled time to plan for action?** Planning next steps can help people leave the room feeling energized and optimistic, even when the discussion has been difficult. Action steps are especially important for people who already have a good deal of experience talking about the issue(s) on the table. For those who are new to the issue(s), just engaging in public discussion serves as an action step.



## Using This Guide

### Facilitating a Discussion

**Controversial or unusual topics often make for excellent discussions. By their nature, those same topics also give rise to deep emotions and strongly held beliefs. As a facilitator, you can create an atmosphere where people feel safe, encouraged, and respected, making it more likely that they will be willing to share openly and honestly. Here's how:**

### Finding a Facilitator

Some university professors, human resource professionals, clergy, and youth leaders may be specially trained in facilitation skills. In addition to these local resources, groups such as the League of Women Voters, the American Association of State Colleges and Universities or groups specializing in civic engagement may also be able to provide skilled facilitators.

### Preparing Yourself

**Identify your own hot-button issues.** View the film before your event and give yourself time to reflect so you aren't dealing with raw emotions at the same time that you are trying to facilitate a discussion.

**Be knowledgeable.** You don't need to be an expert on politics, civics, or rural issues to facilitate a discussion, but knowing the basics can help you keep a discussion on track and gently correct misstatements of fact. In addition to the Background Information section above, you may want to take a look at the suggested websites in the Resources section on p. 17.

**Be clear about your role.** You may find yourself taking on several roles for an event, e.g., host, organizer, projectionist. If you are also planning to serve as facilitator, be sure that you can focus on that responsibility and avoid distractions during the discussion. Keep in mind that being a facilitator is not the same as being a teacher. A teacher's job is to convey specific information. In contrast, a facilitator remains neutral, helping move along the discussion without imposing their views on the dialogue.

**Know your group.** Issues can play out very differently for different groups of people. Is your group new to the issue or have they dealt with it before? Factors like geography, age, race, religion, and socioeconomic class, can all have an impact on comfort levels, speaking styles, and prior knowledge. If you are bringing together different segments of your community, we strongly recommend hiring an experienced facilitator.



## Using This Guide

### Preparing the Group

**Consider how well group members know one another.** If you are bringing together people who have never met, you may want to devote some time at the beginning of the event for introductions.

**Agree to ground rules around language.** Involve the group in establishing some basic rules to ensure respect and aid clarity. Typically such rules include no yelling or use of slurs and asking people to speak in the first person (“I think...”) rather than generalizing for others (“Everyone knows that...”).

**Ensure that everyone has an opportunity to be heard.** Be clear about how people will take turns or indicate that they want to speak. Plan a strategy for preventing one or two people from dominating the discussion. If the group is large, are there plans to break into small groups or partners, or should attendance be limited?

**Talk about the difference between dialogue and debate.** In a debate, participants try to convince others that they are right. In a dialogue, participants try to understand each other and expand their thinking by sharing viewpoints and listening to each other actively. Remind people that they are engaged in a dialogue. This will be especially important in preventing a discussion from dissolving into partisan political debate instead of an examination of political process, rural issues, and/or civic participation.

**Encourage active listening.** Ask the group to think of the event as being about listening, as well as discussing. Participants can be encouraged to listen for things that challenge as well as reinforce their own ideas. You may also consider asking people to practice formal “active listening,” where participants listen without interrupting the speaker, then re-phrase to see if they have heard correctly.

**Remind participants that everyone sees through the lens of their own experience.** Who we are influences how we interpret what we see. So everyone in the group may have a different view about the content and meaning of the film they have just seen, and all of them may be accurate. It can help people to understand one another’s perspectives if people identify the evidence on which they base their opinion as well as share their views.

**Take care of yourself and group members.** If the intensity level rises, pause to let everyone take a deep breath. You might also consider providing a safe space to “vent,” perhaps with a partner or in a small group of familiar faces. If you anticipate that your topic may upset people, be prepared to refer them to local support agencies and/or have local professionals present.



## General Discussion Questions

**Immediately after the film, you may want to give people a few quiet moments to reflect on what they have seen. If the mood seems tense, you may want to pose a general question and give people some time to themselves to jot down or think about their answers before opening the discussion.**

**Unless you think participants are so uncomfortable that they can't engage until they have had a break, don't encourage people to leave the room between the film and the discussion. If you save your break for an appropriate moment during the discussion, you won't lose the feeling of the film as you begin your dialogue.**

One way to get a discussion going is to pose a general question, such as

- **If you could ask anyone in the film a single question, who would you ask and what would you ask them?**
- **Did anything in this film surprise you? If so, what? Why was it surprising?**
- **What insights or new knowledge did you gain from this film?**
- **Two months from now, what do you think you will remember from this film and why?**



Bill Kassebaum getting off of his tractor on his farm in Burdick, Kansas

Photo courtesy of *Bill's Run*



## Discussion Questions

### CAMPAIGNS, ELECTIONS, AND CIVIC PARTICIPATION

- What did you learn about the political process as you watched the film? Did anything surprise you about the campaign and what Bill went through as he sought the office he was running for? Would you consider running for office? Why or why not?
- The final result in Bill's election came down to a difference of only 149 votes—1,982 votes for Bill and 1,833 for Shari—making it clear that each vote really counted. Does each vote count as much in your community? How significant do you



Former Senator Nancy L. Kassebaum on Bill Kassebaum's farm in Burdick, Kansas

Photo courtesy of *Bill's Run*

think your vote is? Do you think it's important to participate in the electoral process? Why or why not? After seeing this film, how do you feel about voting? Does this film make you feel differently about the electoral process than you did before watching it?

- Have you ever worked on a political campaign? If so, what did you learn that you didn't know before about the electoral process? Would you do it again? Why or why not? If you haven't worked on a campaign, what did you learn from the film about that process? Did anything you saw in the film inspire you or discourage you from wanting to work on a campaign?
- How are campaigns where the staff is paid different from Bill's campaign, where all the workers were volunteers? Do you think paying election staff means they are more committed to the success of their candidate?
- After the election, a supporter of Bill's says that some believe he won because of his name and political connections. In your view, how was Bill's campaign affected by the fact that he came from a political family that had a reputation in Kansas? Can you think of other examples where family name recognition made a difference?
- Many people in the film talk about knowing Bill and basing their decisions, in part, on knowing him to be a good man. Is it easier to "know" a candidate in a small town? What are the ways you can get to know a candidate for office? Are you able to "know" the candidates you vote for? What are the challenges to getting to know a candidate, and his positions on the issues, in a city and larger urban community?
- In your community, do people usually vote along party lines? Is there one party that predominates? What do you think about the opposing political parties? Do they represent distinctly different positions on issues? Discuss what you think are the differences between the political parties.
- Bill's mother, former U.S. Senator Nancy Kassebaum, comes into town to help her son in his election campaign. We see Nancy giving Bill advice about how to run his campaign, but she also says, "He doesn't pay any attention to advice I give him, let me tell ya." What can you tell about the relationship between Nancy and Bill from the film? How does their relationship remind you of issues between any parent and child as the child seeks to pave his/her own way in life?

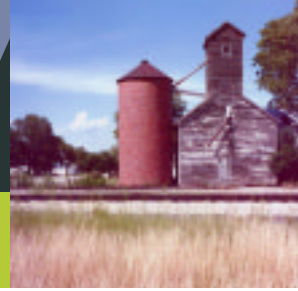


## Discussion Questions

- When she first hears about his candidacy, Bill's mother responds, "You're running against an incumbent, a woman, and the Majority Leader of the House. You've got a bit of an uphill battle." Do incumbents usually win the elections in your community? In your opinion, why might it be difficult to defeat an incumbent? What are the advantages and disadvantages of re-electing incumbents?
- How are issues debated by Bill and his opponent, Shari, different from those debated in more partisan elections, between a Democratic and a Republican candidate? How are they similar?
- How would the film have been different if it was called *Shari's Run* (Bill's opponent) and was filmed from her perspective?

### BURDICK AND RURAL POLITICS

- What did the film reveal about the problems residents of Burdick are struggling with in the present? What did residents say they want to preserve about the town? What issues were raised in the film and in the campaign about the future of Burdick and rural Kansas? Why was the role of government and the use of taxes to support education and other programs relevant?
- Bill says, "Public education is vital to rural Kansas. And if we strangle public education, we're gonna strangle the future of rural Kansas." Do you agree that education is "vital" to a community's future? Discuss the educational system in your community and ways it affects the way of life of the community. How do politics and political officials affect the quality of education in your community? How are educational institutions funded in your community? What role does/should government play in that funding?
- Bill says, "I'm not eager to raise taxes, but I am eager to have an honest discussion about how to solve the main problem with the state. And the main problem is...we don't have money to fund the programs the way they have been funded in the past. If we don't fund the school system, then people will not be willing to move to Kansas. They'll move out of Kansas." He believes that taxes should be raised to pay for education and for services for the elderly and other social services. Do you agree with that?
  - Bill proposes raising taxes for what he calls "the upper income tax bracket" of \$60,000 and above. He suggests adding an additional tax bracket for those who make more than \$110,000 per year. What do you think of this proposal? Discuss the tax laws, and how taxes are a factor in elections in your community and in national elections.
  - A member of the audience at one of Bill's campaign appearances calls him a RINO— "Republican in Name Only." Why do you think he called Bill that? How did Bill handle that exchange with the man who did not agree with his position? What did you learn from the exchange? What are the implications about party image, party affiliation, etc.? In your view, are labels like RINO helpful to voters, i.e., do they clarify a candidate's positions or make it harder to get to know what a candidate believes?
  - You hear Shari say, "I'm not supportive of aborting babies. I think all children are gifts from God whether they're born or unborn, and I am not supportive of legislation for abortion." Bill says, "I'm pro-choice. I don't...obviously I have a lot of problems with abortion. But I believe it should be the choice of the family, and that the government should not get involved in that." How might both of these positions be interpreted as conservative? How has this issue played out in elections in your community?
  - In your view, which issues were central in this election and why? Are the issues also central to you? When you select candidates, what traits and positions are most important to you? What kinds of things do you consider?
  - Much of Bill's campaign is about the future of communities like Burdick. Do you have similar discussions and differences in your community about what the way of life, or the future, should be? How are these differences reflected in elections and in the electoral process that leads up to primary and general elections? Given that federal, state, and local politicians have jurisdiction over different kinds of issues, who is in the best position to help save Burdick's way of life?



## Discussion Questions

- Do you feel that when you vote, you have as clear a choice between candidates as the voters of Burdick had in choosing between Bill and Shari? Is it difficult for you to distinguish between the positions of opposing candidates? How did Bill, during his campaign, distinguish himself from his opponent? Did that play a role in the final outcome of the race?
- The filmmaker cuts between scenes of Bill campaigning and beautiful camera shots of Bill's farm, the animals, Bill and his family working on the farm, and the pace of life in Burdick. How did you react to the interviews with the older generation from Burdick? Why do you think the filmmaker used Earl Peterson, the owner of the gas station, to begin and end the film?

the Lutheran church out here and that's why I'm still there too." Why is his statement significant? Do you think others vote the way their parents and grandparents did, in terms of political party?

### THE ROLE OF RURAL LIFE IN THE U.S.

- After viewing the film, how would you say your community is different from Burdick? How is it similar? Did any of your answers surprise you?
- The film begins with the narrator—the filmmaker, Bill's brother—saying, "The town of Burdick sits one hour southeast of Abilene, on the edge of the Flint Hills. It has 60 residents, a post office, meat market and gas station." What was your initial reaction when you heard that the film was about such a small town? Where do your ideas about small-town life and small-town residents come from?
  - What did you learn about the role of the farmer from this portrait of Bill and his campaign?
  - What is the value of towns like Burdick in our modern society? What do towns like Burdick contribute to the United States?
  - Does viewing the film make you want to go and visit or live in the town of Burdick someday? Why or why not?
  - As the film notes, many small towns are in danger of disappearing due to declining population. If you were the mayor of a town like Burdick, and part of your job was to attract people to live in your town, how would you do it? What would you say? What role might technology play in people's ability to live in your town and still earn a living or get a high-quality education?



Burdick, Kansas in winter at dusk

Photo: Howard Baker

- Earl, the owner of Burdick oil, says, "I suppose that's why I'm a Republican. I've just stayed with what they was. And the same way with the church. Both of my grandpas helped start



## Taking Action

- Brainstorm ways that you might increase the numbers of people in your community who:
  - vote
  - work on campaigns
  - run for office
- Contact a candidate whose positions you support and find out what you can do to help him or her get elected.
- Work with non-partisan groups such as the League of Women Voters to ensure that citizens in your community have accurate information about candidates running for office.
- Host a forum where candidates can share their beliefs and plans in formats beyond simple sound bites.
- Create a website that evaluates claims of local candidates. For an example of a site that provides this service on a national level, see [www.factcheck.org](http://www.factcheck.org).
- Create a TV or radio public service announcement encouraging people to vote. Ask local radio stations or cable access channels to play your PSA. For examples of youth-produced PSAs, check out the website of the Listen Up! Youth Media Network, [www.listenup.org](http://www.listenup.org).



Bill Kassebaum in Milo Field on his farm in Burdick, Kansas

Photo courtesy of *Bill's Run*



## Resources

### Websites

#### **P.O.V.'s *Bill's Run* Website**

**[www.pbs.org/pov/lpov2004/billsrun](http://www.pbs.org/pov/lpov2004/billsrun)**

#### **General Overview**

Access the *Bill's Run* website at [www.pbs.org/pov](http://www.pbs.org/pov) to find out more about rural flight from the Great Plains states and ideas to turn the tide, read up on today's struggle to define the Republican party, get an update on Bill's first term in office and more.

#### **Welcome to Burdick, Pop. 60**

The biggest threat facing Great Plains small towns like Burdick, Kansas is an out-migration that has been going on for the past 40 years. Learn more about the history of the town of Burdick and "rural flight," and browse through P.O.V.'s "Burdick Old & New" photo gallery.

#### **Ask Bill**

Wondering how things went for Bill Kassebaum in his first term? P.O.V. spoke with Bill about the committees he served on, the progress he made on school finance reform, and how he balanced ranching and legislature duties during the term. Viewers are invited to send in their own questions and Bill will answer a selection.

### What's Your P.O.V.?

*P.O.V.'s online Talking Back Tapestry is a colorful, interactive representation of your feelings about **Bill's Run**. Listen to other P.O.V. viewers talk about the film and add your thoughts by calling 1-800-688-4768. [www.pbs.org/pov/talkingback.html](http://www.pbs.org/pov/talkingback.html)*

#### **Mommy, What's a RINO?**

During Bill's first run for office, he was baffled when a constituent called him a "RINO" (a Republican In Name Only) during a debate with his Republican primary opponent. In this field guide for would-be RINO-spotters, P.O.V. explores how this new term in the political vocabulary reflects the current struggle to define what constitutes a "real" Republican.

#### **Resources**

Find out more about Bill and the Kassebaum family political legacy, read up on Kansas past and future, and explore other related PBS and NPR programs and websites.



## Resources

### FOR VOTING AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

#### **[www.ncl.org/about/usefultools.html](http://www.ncl.org/about/usefultools.html)**

The website of the National Civic League includes resources designed to help people increase the level of civic engagement in their communities.

#### **[www.lwv.org](http://www.lwv.org)**

The website of the League of Women Voters includes lots of information about civic participation and encouraging people to vote, as well as links to major political parties and other organizations focused on voting.

#### **[www.rockthevote.org](http://www.rockthevote.org)**

A helpful website for those working with college-age voters.

#### **[www.publicagenda.org](http://www.publicagenda.org)**

This non-partisan organization focuses on public engagement by conducting research on public opinion. Their Issue Guides summarize key campaign issues, including all major positions and key facts and figures.

Many universities also run civic engagement research and projects. To find out more, use your web browser to search on "civic engagement."

### FOR RURAL AND EDUCATION ISSUES

#### **[www.ers.usda.gov/briefing/Population](http://www.ers.usda.gov/briefing/Population)**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture site includes links to a variety of reports on trends in rural life and resources for and about rural communities.

#### **[www.ruralschools.org](http://www.ruralschools.org)**

Organizations Concerned about Rural Education is a coalition of more than two dozen education, farm, rural, technology and utility organizations dedicated to ensuring high quality, modern schools for rural children. Their website includes toolkit materials for those who are interested in advocacy on behalf of rural education.

#### **[www.nrea.net](http://www.nrea.net)**

The website of the National Rural Education Association includes for download journal issues of *The Country Teacher* (on Best Practices), *Rural Education*, and *Rural Education News*, as well as a list of links to related organizations.

### Vanishing Point: The Empty Heartland

#### **[www.nytimes.com/ref/national/RURAL\\_INDEX.html](http://www.nytimes.com/ref/national/RURAL_INDEX.html)**

*This New York Times* series examines the effects of rural depopulation in and around the Great Plains. There are four articles in the series, plus a multimedia presentation that features images and audio narration from Times reporter, Timothy Egan. (December 2003)



## How to Buy the Film

To buy or rent *Bill's Run: A Political Journey in Rural Kansas*, please go to [www.billsrun.com](http://www.billsrun.com)



Now entering its 17th season on PBS, P.O.V. is the first and longest-running series on television to feature the work of

America's most innovative independent documentary storytellers. Bringing over 200 award-winning films to millions nationwide, and now a new Web-only series, P.O.V.'s *Borders*, P.O.V. has pioneered the art of presentation and outreach using independent non-fiction media to build new communities in conversation about today's most pressing social issues.

Major funding for P.O.V. is provided by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, the New York State Council on the Arts, the Educational Foundation of America, PBS and public television viewers. Funding for *P.O.V.'s Borders* ([www.pbs.org/pov](http://www.pbs.org/pov)) is provided by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. Support for P.O.V. is provided by Starbucks Coffee Company. P.O.V. is presented by a consortium of public television stations including KCET/Los Angeles, WGBH/Boston, and WNET/New York. Cara Mertes is executive director of P.O.V., which is a division of American Documentary, Inc.

### P.O.V. Interactive

[www.pbs.org/pov](http://www.pbs.org/pov)

P.O.V.'s award-winning Web department produces our Web-only showcase for interactive storytelling, P.O.V.'s *Borders*. It also produces a web site for every P.O.V. presentation, extending the life of P.O.V. films through community-based and educational applications, focusing on involving viewers in activities, information, and feedback on the issues. In addition, [www.pbs.org/pov](http://www.pbs.org/pov) houses our unique *Talking Back* feature, filmmaker interviews and viewer resources, and information on the P.O.V. archives as well as a myriad of special sites for previous P.O.V. broadcasts.

### American Documentary, Inc.

[www.americandocumentary.org](http://www.americandocumentary.org)

American Documentary, Inc. (AmDoc) is a multimedia company dedicated to creating, identifying, and presenting contemporary stories that express opinions and perspectives rarely featured in mainstream media outlets. Through two divisions, *P.O.V.* and *Active Voice*, AmDoc is a catalyst for public culture; developing collaborative strategic engagement activities around socially relevant content on television, on line, and in community settings. These activities are designed to trigger action, from dialogue and feedback, to educational opportunities and community participation.



P.O.V.'s *Bill's Run: A Political Journey in Rural Kansas* is a PBS Program Club pick. PBS Program Clubs work like book clubs, but for TV. Talk about *Bill's Run* with your friends,

family or co-workers. Visit [www.pbs.org/pbsprogramclub](http://www.pbs.org/pbsprogramclub) to find out how to start your own club and get tips on getting the conversation started.

Front cover:  
Representative Bill Kassebaum sits on the floor beside the Speaker's chair at the state capital in Topeka, Kansas

Photo: Nick Krug for the Topeka Capital Journal

