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RON KREHBIEL
Burrton

March 9, 2015

Honorable Kansas State Representative Mark Kahrs
Chairman, House Committee on Elections
and Distinguished Members of the Committee

Re: Senate Bill 171, Concerning Municipality & School Elections

Chairman Kahrs and Distinguished Committee Members,

As Harvey County Clerk and Election Officer, I thank you for your time in allowing me to testify on this bill. I have identified several issues that I feel should be considered prior to making this change. I am not opposed to the bill in the form passed by the Senate, moving the City and School Elections to the fall of odd years and keeping them as non-partisan elections.

The "compromise" offered in the House Ethics and Elections Committee, on SB 171 to change elections to fall of even-numbered years but leave City and School races non-partisan and move the local races to the top of the ballot is not a valid compromise at all, but is the worst case scenario of all the choices proposed to move the spring elections. In Harvey County combining elections with fall of even-numbered year elections would create about 35-40 more ballot styles than our normal 37 styles for a total of about 75 styles. Combining these elections would probably require multi-sheet ballots (more than just F&B of 1 sheet) increasing voter confusion and the possibility of counting errors. In a regular partisan primary the total ballot styles would double to about 150 total styles (Republican & Democrat). If part of the races were non-partisan then the total ballot styles would triple to about 225 total styles (Republican, Democrat & non-partisan options). In Harvey County we have about 21,000 registered voters. We have 12 polling places, so each polling place would have about 19 ballot styles each, one site would have 24 styles. The chances of pollworker errors from providing the wrong ballot to the voter increases dramatically with each additional ballot style, even though we have established a good system for eliminating these types of errors. Moving local races to the top of the ballot is probably not a bad idea, but the voter will probably just turn over their stack of ballot pages and vote the big races.

All of the Election Officials in Kansas work hard to make sure that Kansas Elections are administered in a professional manner. We oppose this bill because we feel that the resulting elections will be more expensive, much harder to manage and they will be more prone to errors. Thank you for allowing me to testify on this issue.

Sincerely,



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