

LEGISLATIVE TESTIMONY

FROM BLUE VALLEY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT 229



**SENATE COMMITTEE ON ETHICS AND ELECTIONS
TESTIMONY ON SENATE BILL 171
Hearing Date: February 11, 2015**

On behalf of Blue Valley USD 229, thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in opposition to Senate Bill 171 (SB 171). SB 171 moves school board elections from February and April of odd years, to August and November of even years, and seats newly elected board members in January, as opposed to July. SB 171 also makes school district elections partisan, and requires that schools which are used as polling places not be in session on days of the primary and general election. USD 229 strongly opposes SB 171.

USD 229 is opposed to SB 171 for several reasons. One, USD 229 is concerned about the mid-school year transition that a new Board would have on operations and culture of a district. New boards seated in July are able to start the school year as a cohesive group. Seating a new Board in January serves no positive purpose. Two, SB 171 requires that schools which are used as polling places not be in session on days of the primary and general election. Requiring a subset of schools to close effectively requires all schools to close in a district. Again, this serves no positive purpose, and disrupts a school calendar. Three, the current timetable allows school board elections to stand on their own on the ballot, and allows for a greater understanding on the part of the local electorate about the stances and beliefs each candidate has. Moving this election to a more crowded fall election would dilute a local candidate's message given the plethora of other issues on the ballot at that time. Fourth, SB 171 requires a school district to make its buildings available as polling places at the request of the county election officer. USD 229 sees this as unnecessary. Currently, USD 229 works closely with the election officer, and tries to make its buildings available. However, in those instances when the building cannot be available due to a variety of reasons, USD 229 believes it should not be compelled to do so. Fifth, USD 229 feels that school board elections should be kept non-partisan. The community is better served when school board members are elected primarily based on personal ideas and beliefs, rather than on an alignment with a particular political party. Additionally, partisan elections would bar federal executive branch and military employees from running for office. USD 229 feels this is disenfranchising to those who want to serve as board members and cannot due to the partisan nature of the elections.

For these reasons, we ask for your opposition to SB 171.

President, Board of Education
Blue Valley Schools, USD 229