

CITY OF SHAWNEE

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SENATE ETHICS AND ELECTIONS COMMITTEE HEARING ON SB 171

Opposition Testimony to SB 171 on behalf of the City of Shawnee

By Katie Killen, Assistant City Manager
February 11, 2015

Honorable Chair and members of the Senate Ethics and Elections Committee,

The City of Shawnee strongly opposes SB 171. As part of their 2015 State Legislative Program, the City of Shawnee's Governing Body unanimously adopted the following position:

The City supports the current schedule and structure of local elections and is opposed to any legislation that would require local elections be conducted with partisan identification, or vacancies in non-partisan elected positions be filled through partisan means.

This bill seeks to make local elections partisan and moves them in line with the federal and state election cycle. The City of Shawnee opposes this for the following reasons:

- Moving elections to the fall of even numbered years crowds out local issues. This fall election cycle already has many issues and candidates that need to be covered by the media. Adding local elections to this only decreases the coverage of these races and the amount of information going out to voters on local races.
- Moving elections to the fall of even numbered years also limits voters' ability to thoroughly research candidates and issues based on the number of items that will be on their ballot if this bill should pass.
- Finally, one of the most compelling reasons this bill should not be passed is its disregard for what residents have expressly supported in our City Charter ordinances that utilize non-partisan elections. There are mechanisms in place if residents felt compelled to change this. Residents could have either voted against Charters when they have been put on the ballot, or protested Charters when passed by the governing body. Additionally, residents in Johnson County voted to include in their County Charter to hold elections on a non-partisan basis.

For these reasons, the City of Shawnee asks on behalf of our residents, who have supported our City Charter, to allow us to continue to operate our elections the way we have for years. That is, holding them in the spring and on a non-partisan basis.

Thank you for your consideration.

