

MINUTES OF THE SENATE ELECTIONS AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT.

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Senator Janice Hardenburger at 1:30 p.m. on February 9, 2000, in Room 529-S of the Capitol.

All members were present:

Committee staff present: Dennis Hodgins, Legislative Research Department
Mike Heim, Legislative Research Department
Ken Wilke, Revisor of Statutes
Graceanna Wood, Committee Secretary

Conferees appearing before the committee: Stan Larson, Past Chairman, State Extension Advisory Council
Jim Linquist, Northeast Kansas Area Extension District
Bill Fuller, Kansas Farm Bureau
Rebecca Bossemeyer, Geary County Clerk
Lonie Addis, Labette County Commissioner
Rebecca Bossemeyer, Geary County Clerk

Others attending: See attached list

Chairman Hardenburger opened the hearing on **SB 535 concerning extension districts; and repealing the existing section.** Presently, the extension council members are appointed. **SB 535** would require council members to be elected by the public.

Stan Larson, Past Chairman of the State Extension Advisory Council (SEAC) and Chair of the SEAC Committee, who is in favor of the bill, presented testimony to the Committee that the Extension election Committee made a recommendation to the SEAC that the county Extension elections be patterned after the method prescribed in the Kansas Extension District Law and in the manner provided by law for general county elections. (Attachment #1)

Chairman Hardenburger asked Mr. Larson to expand on the Extension District Law. Mr. Larson said, the Extension District Law allows counties to join together as one extension unit, rather than being separate counties. Also, the County Extension Law gives these two counties taxing authority as well as budgeting authority and are governed by four individuals elected at the general election from each of the participating counties.

Chairman Hardenburger asked Mr. Larson if after achieving an elected council, would the next step be to ask for the ability to levy taxes. Mr. Larson advised the Committee that there would not.

Chairman Hardenburger advised the Committee that the fiscal note states that there would be no additional expense to the state. The cost of an election would be the responsibility of the counties.

Dr. Jim Linquist gave testimony to the Committee endorsing the changes proposed by the State Extension Advisory Committee in the County Extension Council Law. He said this would allow a more representative election process with more participation by the voting public, a four year term for Council members and greater local programming flexibility and an assurance that the knowledge K-State Research and Extension delivers through county extension programs would reflect the priorities of local citizens. (Attachment #2)

The Committee discussed if there was a problem getting people to agree to serve, and if the people elected would or would not be on an advisory committee.

Bill Fuller, Associate Director, Public Policy Division Kansas Farm Bureau who is in favor of the bill, informed the Committee this would authorize County Extension Councils to appoint three or more program development committees rather than mandating the four specific program committees contained in current law. This would allow counties to match extension programs to the actual needs of each county. (Attachment #3)

CONTINUATION SHEET

Rebecca Bossemeyer, Geary County Clerk, presented testimony expressing her concerns regarding County Election Officials being required to conduct elections for the Extension Council, as proposed in **SB 535**. (Attachment #4)

The Committee discussed if there would be additional expense for balloting.

Lonie R. Addis, Labette County Commissioner and President, Kansas County Commissioners Association, expressed concerns about the current proposals in **SB 535**, such as expense which would be incurred by counties in the new election process and the subsequent taxing authority that the proposed Council could eventually gain. (Attachment #5)

The Committee discussed whether to amend the bill to require county option. Questions arose such as: if it went statewide, would there be more information on how it is working, and whether it is increasing participation in the county where the extension in that county changed, based on increased awareness of what the Extension can do, and if there is an urgency in the proposal.

Chairman Hardenburger closed the hearing on **SB 535** and encouraged more dialog between the principals, to provide some additional guidance to the Committee for a solution.

Meeting was adjourned at 2:30 p.m. Next meeting is scheduled for February 10, 2000.

ELECTIONS & LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE GUEST LIST

DATE: FEBRUARY 9, 2000

NAME	REPRESENTING
SUE PETERSON	K-STATE
Rich Vargo	Riley County
Lonie R. ADDIS	Lebelle County
Donna Maskus	Ellis County
Alice Sander	Ellis County
Bill Fuller	Kansas Farm Bureau
Florence Whitehead	Geary County
Lisa Trickholt	Geary County
Jim Lindquist	K-STATE Research & Extension
Lucy Patterson	Jefferson County
Kenneth Patten	Jefferson County
Rebecca Bosseneyer	Geary Co. Clerk
Judy Melus	15. Assn of Counties
Marci Voss	Sedgwick County
John Dank	Stevens Co.
Melvin H. Bell	Stevens Co.
Allen L. Anderson	Johnson County
Arthur Peterson	Douglas Co.
Rick Miller	Johnson Co.

I am Stan Larson, Past Chairperson of the State Extension Advisory Council (SEAC) and Chair of the SEAC committee to evaluate the county council election procedures.

During the five years that I have served the State Extension Advisory Council, the county extension elections have always been a topic of discussion and concern. About two years ago, a committee was formed to examine the present Extension election law and to make a recommendation to the SEAC for possible changes.

The goal of the SEAC election procedures committee was to provide an election procedure that:

1. would be uniform across the State,
2. would provide for greater public access to voting,
3. would be understood by the registered voters,
4. the results of the election would be creditable.

The Extension election committee surveyed counties, solicited suggestions from many people including Extension Council members, county Extension agents, county government officials, and state legislators. The committee also met with Secretary of State Ron Thornburgh to obtain his advice.

After considering this input, the elections committee made a recommendation to the SEAC that the county Extension elections be patterned after the method in the Kansas Extension District Law and in the manner provided by law for general county elections.

The recommendation was presented to the SEAC at their meeting held August 20, 1999 in Hays. The SEAC voted unanimously to support the general concept of electing Extension Council Board members at a county general election. Another meeting was then held with Secretary of State Ron Thornburgh and final adjustments were made to the recommendation for a new method of election. Ron Thornburgh said he would support such a proposal.

The major points in our recommendation for election method changes in the Extension Council Law are:

1. Elections for the Extension Council Board shall be conducted in the manner provided by law for general county elections.
2. The Board will be elected by the registered voters that participate in the general election.
3. The election will be held the first Tuesday in April of each odd-numbered year. The SEAC had seriously considered the November general election, but April was selected because of the strong sentiment of decision-makers about holding non-partisan elections in the April elections.
4. The length of term of members of the Extension Council Board will be four years, with terms of office beginning on July 1 following election.
5. Because the input we received indicated a preference for an odd-numbered Board, and using other elected Boards as a guide, the final recommendation is for a seven member Board to be elected at-large from the county.
6. The Executive Board will appoint the first seven member board when the Legislature approves the change in the Extension election method. Four of those positions will be up for election in the first odd-year election that follows the law change, and three members in the second odd-year election.
7. The Board will reorganize in July of each year by electing the Board officers. The officers are President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer.
8. Program Development Committees will be appointed by the Extension Council Board. The Board is to appoint three or more PDCs that represent the programming priorities in the county. Specific PDCs will not be required in the law.

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Attachment # 1-2

We feel these changes will involve more people in Extension Council elections and create more awareness of Extension programs. These recommendations address many of the concerns about our current election method and we feel will result in more flexibility for Extension Council Boards and will strengthen Extension programs.

Thank you.

**Testimony Before The Senate Committee On
Elections and Local Government
SB 535, County Extension Council Election Process**

Dr. Jim Lindquist

K-State Research and Extension Northeast Area Director

February 9, 2000

Senator Hardenburger, I would like to thank you and your committee for the opportunity to give testimony today to endorse the changes proposed by the State Extension Advisory Committee (SEAC) in the County Extension Council Law. The SEAC has been working for several years to determine appropriate changes for the Extension Council election process, consulting several times with Secretary of State Ron Thornburg and Assistant Brad Bryant. I believe the changes in Senate Bill 535 will accomplish the Advisory Committee's objective of improving Extension Council governance. After recommendation by the SEAC, K-State Research and Extension administration, Kansas State University administration, and the Kansas Board of Regents (Dec. 16, 1999) all endorsed the contents of this bill.

First, let me explain that the SEAC is a group of 24 citizens from all over the state, each of whom has been a County Extension Council Board Chairperson. Members are selected at annual partnership meetings by other County Board Chairs from across the state. So, the State Extension Advisory Council members are representative of County Extension units, are experienced in local extension governance, and are geographically representative of Kansas.

The Extension Council in Kansas is a local unit of government that was created by the Kansas Legislature to be the local partner of the Land Grant University in guiding the use of public resources when conducting extension educational work as called for by the federal Smith-Lever Act. This unique partnership of federal, state and local government provides citizens with educational programs that address local issues. These programs utilize research-based knowledge from our Land Grant institutions, allowing all citizens the opportunity to directly benefit from the work of the University.

Current law allows citizens to participate in the Extension Council election by attending an election meeting and electing Extension Council members. Elected Board members take the oath of public office as they begin their term. The election meetings have been too poorly attended for the Extension Councils to be truly representative of the county populace with less than one percent of the electorate participating in most counties. Election of the Extension Council at a general county-wide election would allow all citizens the opportunity to participate in the election process at the same time they are voting for other elected officials. The state of Iowa changed their Extension Council election method in the early 1990's to elect a non-partisan county Extension Council on the general election ballot. Their election method is much like the one proposed in this legislation. Iowa Extension Council members and Iowa State University Extension representatives report that this change has been very positive in increasing citizen involvement and awareness and improving Extension program governance.

The election procedures proposed in this legislation are patterned after the method used in the

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Attachment # 2-1

Kansas District Extension Law. We currently have five counties in Kansas that are part of Extension Districts and elect their Extension governing boards at the spring general election. One of these counties, Mitchell County, is one of the counties I work with and I have followed the election process there for the past several years. The County Clerk in Mitchell County, Joleen Walker, is the Chair of the Kansas County Clerk's Association and has accommodated the election of Extension governing board members as part of the spring general election with no problems or concerns. She is willing to visit with any of you that might have questions and can be reached at 785-738-3652.

There are other reasons why K-State Research and Extension supports this legislation. The term of office for an Extension Council member is currently two years. The Council members report this is too short a time to allow board members sufficient experience to be effective. It is also possible to have nearly a 100 percent turnover in the Executive Board, with no continuity from year to year in Extension Council management. The change in the law to have four year terms that are staggered to elect four members in one election and three in the next election would allow for a longer term of office and more continuity from year to year in the management of Extension Council programs, personnel and budgets.

Members of the SEAC feel SB 535 provides counties more flexibility in determining local program priorities. The current law requires the election of advisory members to specific committees in the areas of agriculture, family and consumer sciences, 4-H and economic development. This bill allows election of Extension Council members with responsibility for all local Extension programming and the freedom to appoint as many program development committees as necessary to adequately address local programming needs.

In closing, let me reiterate that the State Extension Advisory Committee has developed these changes in the Extension Council law after a great deal of study and discussion with Extension Councils across the state. As a representative of K-State Research and Extension, I am confident that the changes proposed in the Extension Council law will improve Extension Council governance by allowing a more representative election process with more participation by the voting public, four year terms for Council members and greater local programming flexibility. The changes will help to assure that the knowledge K-State Research and Extension delivers through county extension programs reflects the priorities of local citizens.

Dr. Marc Johnson, Dean of the Kansas State University College of Agriculture and Director of the Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service contacted and sent copies of the SEAC proposal to the Chairman and Executive Director of the Kansas Association of Counties, the Chairwoman of the Association of County Clerks and their Elections Committee Chair and requested comments and suggestions for adjustment. To date, we have not received any comment or suggestions for changes from representatives of those groups.

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Attachment # 1-2



PUBLIC POLICY STATEMENT

SENATE COMMITTEE ON ELECTIONS & LOCAL GOVERNMENT

**RE: SB 535 – Restructuring the election process and
responsibilities of county extension councils.**

**February 9, 2000
Topeka, Kansas**

**Prepared by:
Bill R. Fuller, Associate Director
Public Policy Division
Kansas Farm Bureau**

Chairperson Hardenburger and members of the Senate Elections & Local Government Committee, my name is Bill Fuller. I serve as the Associate Director of the Public Policy Division for Kansas Farm Bureau.

Kansas Farm Bureau has long-standing policy that was developed by our farm and ranch members expressing strong support for extension programs in Kansas. The member-adopted policy includes these statements:

- *We urge a strong commitment by the Kansas Legislature, Board of Regents and Kansas State University Administration to the land grant tradition of teaching, research and extension.*
- *We support adequate funding for the Kansas State University Research and Extension Service and programs that provide technical specialists, agents, facilities and equipment to deliver research information and provide instruction to the people of the county or extension district.*

The 442 Voting Delegates representing the 105 county Farm Bureaus adopted new policy at the 81st Annual Meeting in Wichita, Kansas last fall that relates to the proposal to change the extension law:

As a means to increase support and broaden the utilization of County Extension programs, we support the option of electing the members of County Extension Councils at existing county-wide elections by the qualified electors of the various counties.

SB 535 would allow for more flexibility. It authorizes county extension councils to appoint three or more program development committees rather than mandating the four specific program committees contained in current law. This would allow counties to match extension programs to the actual needs of each county.

The major change recommended in SB 535 relates to the election process that would be followed to select the members of the county extension councils. The plan would have the 7-person county extension council elected in a county-wide election by the qualified electors of the county. We recognize the need to involve more citizens in extension elections, particularly since extension programs are funded with public tax revenues.

While Kansas Farm Bureau supports the bill, we recommend the new county-wide election process be approved as an option for county extension councils to adopt. We request the county-wide election proposal not be mandated statewide, at least at this time.

Thank you for the opportunity to express Farm Bureau's support and recommendations on SB 535.



REBECCA BOSSEMEYER
GEARY COUNTY CLERK

139 E. 8th St., PO Box 927 / Junction City, KS 66441-0927
PHONE (913) 238-3912 • FAX (913) 238-5419

TESTIMONY
Concerning SB 535
Extension Council Election

Presented by Rebecca Bossemeyer
Geary County Clerk
February 9, 2000

I am here to express my concerns about County Election Officials being required to conduct elections for the Extension Council.

While city/school elections may seem easy to conduct, in fact, they are more complicated because of the fact school districts cross county lines and there are three methods for electing school board members. My first concern is the fact that all Geary County voters do not vote in Geary County in April of odd-numbered years because school districts cross county lines. Voters in Geary County vote in Morris, Dickinson, Riley, and Wabaunsee counties for school board races. In addition Riley County voters come to Geary County to vote in USD 475 elections.

Conducting the extension council elections, at this time, will increase the cost because several different ballots will be required. Costs will increase further if all Geary County voters stay in Geary County to vote because of the need to open all polling place and hiring workers to man those places.

I am also concerned because I see no mention in the bill for a filing fee, while all other offices except precinct committeemen and women require a fee. Will the extension council candidates fall under any campaign finance act?

Finally, this is yet another example of an unfunded mandate at the same time other revenues to counties, such as LAVTR, and City/County Revenue Sharing are being reduced. It is also another example of proposed legislation without consulting with the KAC or Clerk's Association prior to introduction.

The KAC and Clerks Association would welcome a dialogue with extension representatives to ascertain a plan that would address both of our needs and concerns.

Thank you.

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Date: 2-9-00
Attachment # 4

**SENATE BILL # 535
POSITION STATEMENT
KANSAS COUNTY COMMISSIONERS ASSOCIATION**

Dear Chairman Hardenburger and members of the Senate Committee on Elections and Local Government:

The several counties and commissions across the state of Kansas have some concerns about the current proposals in SB 535. Our initial concern is the expense which would be incurred by counties in the new election process and the subsequent taxing authority that the proposed Council, under SB 535, could eventually gain.

The county clerks of Kansas can better address the costs of the proposed election process. The current procedures in the budgeting for extension services between the various Executive Boards of County Extension Councils and the Boards of County Commissioners is a method that works quite well. We as residents and taxpayers are assured of reasonable services at a minimum expense. Counties need to be assured that the Extension Council's ultimate goal is not to become a taxing authority.

The Kansas County Commissioners Association would like to see an interim committee established with representatives to include county commissioners, county clerks and representatives of the Extension Councils. Our legislative platform process for the 2000 legislative session was almost done when we became aware of this proposal. As such, we think it would be premature for you to work this bill now. With some time and opportunity for all parties to come together, I am confident we could come to an understanding that all parties could feel comfortable with. Due to counties' substantial participation in funding extension councils, I don't think a short delay until the next session is an unreasonable request. It is key that county government continues our solid working relationship with extension councils. Working jointly, I see no reason why that can't continue.

If I can ever be of service to the members of this committee in addressing any question, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,



Lonie R. Addis
Labette County Commissioner and President,
Kansas County Commissioners Association

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Senate Elections & Local Government
Date: 2-9-00
Attachment # 5