

HB2057 Written Only Opponent Testimony

Chairman Proctor and Members of the Committee,

While I don't particularly care for the current method of filling vacancies in Kansas, I am even less supportive of the process outlined in HB2057. I understand that time is often of the essence when filling these vacancies, but I firmly believe the people should have a greater voice in the process.

Legislators are indeed elected by the people, but too often, they appear to represent the interests of large corporations, lobbyists, or even themselves rather than reflecting the will of their constituents. This disconnect only amplifies my concerns about the proposal in HB2057, particularly its concentration of power in the legislature.

Section 3 of the bill states that nominations for candidates will come solely from the legislature. The people originally elected the outgoing official, yet under this bill, voters have no say in the temporary replacement. Also troubling is that this process allows the legislature to select from three candidates, and that appointee could potentially serve nearly a full term. This effectively strips Kansans of their voice in representation and puts significant power in the hands of a few. It feels more like a political maneuver than a democratic process, and I cannot support it.

Furthermore, the committee tasked with nominating the candidates would consist of five members from the majority party in each legislative chamber and only two members from the minority party. This disproportionate representation further consolidates power within the majority party and undermines the principle of fair representation. While the bill stipulates that the replacement must come from the same party as the outgoing official, the process remains partisan. Given this, it seems redundant to include minority party members in such limited numbers if their influence is negligible. This imbalance reinforces my concern that the process prioritizes political maneuvering over ensuring the people's voice is heard.

Additionally, the bill provides for the expense of a special session of the legislature, which is likely to be needed given that the Kansas Legislature is only in session for 90 days. This provision only adds to my concerns about the cost and political nature of the process.

While I would support a temporary fix to the existing statute requiring that any appointment come from the same political party as the outgoing elected official, I remain deeply concerned about the broader implications of this bill. Ensuring consistency in representation is essential, but it does not address the lack of input from voters.

I recognize the committee prefers to limit discussion to the bill at hand and not suggestions for alternative solutions. However, I believe it is worth considering a method that better represents the people. While special elections are costly and require time to organize, they remain the most democratic option available. If a special election is deemed impractical, I suggest adopting a process similar to how vacancies in the U.S. House of Representatives are filled using a combination of all four state Congressional Districts. This process would give the people—

through their local party representatives—a voice in selecting the replacement, rather than leaving it entirely to the legislature.

While I am open to exploring ways to improve the system, I firmly believe that the voice of the people must remain the priority. Democracy demands that we put voters first, even if it requires more effort, time, and resources to do so. I respectfully request the committee vote against passing this bill out of committee.

Respectfully submitted,

Kari Sue
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Sedgwick County Precinct Committeewoman