

PROPONENT TESTIMONY ON SENATE BILL 105
An Act Concerning Vacancies in Certain Statewide Elected Offices

Presented to the Senate Committee on Federal and State Affairs
By Kansas State Treasurer Steven Johnson

February 6, 2025

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SB 105 which establishes a structured, transparent, and fair process for filling vacancies in the offices of United States Senator, State Treasurer, and Commissioner of Insurance. This bill ensures continuity, upholds democratic principles, and maintains the integrity of our electoral system.

Under the current system, the Governor has unilateral authority to appoint a replacement to these important positions. This bill introduces a more balanced approach by requiring the appointment of an individual from the same political party as the departing officeholder while also incorporating legislative input through the nomination of three qualified candidates. By doing so, the bill achieves several key objectives:

1. **Preserving Voter Intent** – When Kansans elect officials, they do so based on policy positions, party platforms, and values. This legislation ensures that a vacancy does not lead to a sudden shift in representation that contradicts the will of the voters.
2. **Enhancing Transparency and Accountability** – The creation of the Joint Committee on Vacancy Appointments allows for greater legislative oversight in the selection process, preventing politically motivated or arbitrary appointments. This process fosters a more deliberative and democratic approach.
3. **Ensuring Stability in Leadership** – The positions of U.S. Senator, State Treasurer, and Insurance Commissioner carry significant responsibilities that directly impact Kansas citizens. A structured process with clear timelines and bipartisan legislative involvement guarantees that vacancies are filled in a timely and responsible manner.
4. **Continuity of Operations** - SB 105 plays a crucial role in maintaining the continuity of operations for the offices of U.S. Senator, State Treasurer, and Insurance Commissioner. These offices are integral to the day-to-day governance of our state and the well-being of our citizens. When a vacancy arises, it is vital that these offices continue to function without disruption, ensuring that the services and responsibilities tied to these positions are upheld seamlessly.
5. **Preventing Partisan Manipulation** – By requiring the appointed individual to have been a member of the same political party as the departing official, this bill prevents strategic party-switching or politically motivated appointments that undermine electoral outcomes.

In closing, SB 105 strengthens our electoral system, respects voter decisions, and enhances public trust in the appointment process. I urge the committee to support this common-sense legislation and advance it for further consideration.

Thank you for your time, and I am happy to stand for questions.