

SB105 Opponent Written Only Testimony

Chairman Thompson and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on SB105. While I don't agree with the current method of filling vacancies in Kansas, I am even less supportive of the process outlined in this bill. I understand the need for efficiency when vacancies arise, but I firmly believe the people should have a greater voice in the process.

Legislators are elected by the people, but too often, their decisions seem to reflect the interests of lobbyists, corporations, or political insiders rather than those they were elected to serve. 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.

Under this bill, the power to nominate and appoint a replacement would rest almost entirely with the legislature. Voters originally elected the outgoing official, yet under SB105, they have no say in the temporary replacement, who could serve nearly a full term. While it's true that appointees would come from the same political party as the outgoing official, the process still prioritizes legislative control over public input.

While the structure of SB105 ensures representation from all four congressional districts, the appointments remain controlled by legislative leadership, raising concerns about political maneuvering. The process is deeply partisan and ultimately limits meaningful public involvement in selecting their representative.

Additionally, if a vacancy occurs when the legislature is not in session, the committee simply submits a report to the governor, bypassing broader legislative debate or public scrutiny. This further consolidates power in the hands of a few rather than ensuring a process that is transparent and accountable to the voters.

It is striking that while legislators are excluded from the process of selecting Kansas Supreme Court justices—a position with significant influence on state governance and one they have made no attempt to change—they now seek to assert more control in filling vacancies for U.S. Senator, State Treasurer, and Commissioner of Insurance. Why do legislators suddenly believe their right to fill these vacancies is so important, but advance nothing to change the judicial process? This contradiction raises questions about whether the desire for more control is truly about governance, or simply about consolidating political power.

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 important, but it does not address the lack of input from voters.

I understand the committee prefers to focus on the bill at hand rather than alternative proposals, but I believe it's important to consider solutions that better reflect the will of the people. Special elections may require time and resources, but they remain the most democratic option. If that is deemed impractical, a modification of the process for filling U.S. House vacancies could be used in which all four state congressional districts would select a nominee. This approach, incorporating input from local party representatives rather than relying solely on the legislature, would give the public a greater role in selecting their representation.

The voice of the people should not be sidelined for the sake of expedience. I respectfully urge the committee to reject this bill.

Respectfully submitted,

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Sedgwick County Precinct Committeewoman