



Opposition Testimony - SCR 1611
Senate Committee on Federal and State Affairs
February 25, 2025
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President, AFT Kansas

Chairman Thompson and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of AFT Kansas in strong opposition to Senate Concurrent Resolution 1611. We urge you to reject this proposal, which seeks to fundamentally change the process for filling vacancies on the Kansas Supreme Court.

At AFT Kansas, we believe that the process for selecting our judges should be grounded in a commitment to impartiality, fairness, and independence from political pressures and stressors. The current system which utilizes the nominating commission has served Kansans well for decades. It is an established process that promotes transparency, accountability, and a judiciary that is above partisan influence.

Senate Concurrent Resolution 1611, which would shift the selection of Kansas Supreme Court justices to a process involving popular elections, is profoundly troubling. We believe that politicizing the court by subjecting it to partisan political processes will only serve to deepen the partisan divisions already present in our country and further deepen them in our state.

Creating an environment where judicial decisions are shaped not by law, but by the need to cater to donors, and partisan political interests, will not serve the pursuit of justice well. The role of the judiciary is to interpret and apply the law impartially, not to bow to partisan ideologies. This change would allow for the shifting of the focus from the legal merits of cases to political considerations. This threatens the fairness and neutrality of the judiciary.

Moreover, we fear the increased role of money in judicial elections, which is an inevitable consequence of this proposed change. Judicial elections would be susceptible to significant outside influence, and under the system proposed in SCR 1611, we can expect undisclosed political action committees (PACs) and dark money interests to play a more prominent and detrimental role. This could result in elections

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where the wealthiest and most politically connected individuals are the ones who determine who sit on our highest court, rather than qualified, impartial jurists.

The principle of “equal justice under the law” has been a cornerstone of our democracy since its founding. It is enshrined in the U.S. Constitution and is essential to the integrity of our legal system. If we allow partisan politics to shape the selection of our judges, we will move further away from the ideal of justice for all and closer to a system where judicial decisions are influenced by political agendas and financial power. This is not the future we want for Kansas.

Finally, we urge the legislature to honor the Kansas Constitution and the thoughtful, nonpartisan process that has served our state so well. We ask that you vote **NO** on SCR 1611 and protect the independence and fairness of the Kansas Supreme Court.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Ron Hobert
President, American Federation of Teachers, Kansas

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