



Women for Kansas

P.O. Box 8774

Wichita, Kansas 67208

WomenForKansas.org

Senate Committee on Federal and State Affairs

SCR 1611

February 25, 2025

Chair Thompson, Ranking Member Faust-Goudeau, and Members of the Senate Committee on Federal and State Affairs:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in opposition to SCR 1611, which proposes a constitutional amendment for the direct election of Kansas Supreme Court Justices and abolishing the Supreme Court Nominating Commission.

My name is Kathy Webb and I'm appearing today on behalf of Women for Kansas. Our organization opposes the election of justices and the abolition of the Supreme Court Nominating Commission. We are a statewide organization and we all agree that maintaining the independence of the judiciary, free from political influence, is best for the State of Kansas. It is important that the judge in any case be focused on the facts and the law before her or him, and not on the opinions of political contributors.

As elected officials, you know first-hand the impact of outside-dark money and the inability to control who is contributing. The Supreme Court Justices are often the final arbitrators-decision makers for the citizens, both individuals and businesses, of Kansas. These litigants trust the Justices to be free from the influence of foreign entities and special interest groups. Citizens will question the validity and reliability of a system that allows the lawyers to donate to a Justice's campaign and later ask that same Justice to provide fair and impartial rulings.

States that have shifted to the election of Supreme Court Justices have not fared well. In a recent Wisconsin Supreme Court election, \$45 million of the \$51 million spent on the election came in dark money from outside the state. Arkansas currently faces judicial gridlock due to elected Supreme Court Justices.

The merit-based system has served Kansans well and prevented scandals involving partisan politics controlling the system. By adopting this merit system, the citizens of Kansas firmly committed to a nonpartisan nomination process which ensures the justices to the highest court in our state have the experience and skills to interpret the laws to serve the best interests of all Kansans. The current merit-based selection process transparently conducts public interviews with candidates. Like any other job interview, this process is designed to select the most qualified person for the job, including one that will be fair and impartial to all Kansans.