

Opponent Written Testimony on Senate Concurrent Resolution 1611

Senate Committee on Federal and State Affairs

Davis Hammet – Loud Light Civic Action

February 25, 2025

Chair Thompson, Members of the Committee,

Concern of Hearing Timing & Public's Ability to Provide Testimony

Testimony Due Within 48-Hours 5-Days Before Hearing

This hearing, on a constitutional amendment to fundamentally change the judicial branch of Kansas, was posted 7 days in advance, but with testimony due 5 days in advance of the hearing. This small 48 hour window to submit testimony occurred during the peak of turnaround week when the legislature and citizens who follow the legislature are focused on the 100+ bills being debated all day. SCR1611 concerns a topic of the highest public importance and the public was not even given a weekend to be informed of the hearing and prepare comments.

Too Many Questions, Too Little Time

Changing the Constitution Deserves a More Serious Process

Given more time, we could have provided information on the national diminishing trust in courts, the dangers posed by politicizing the Kansas Judiciary, the unclear language in SCR1611 and potential unintended consequences, the legislative overreach in legislators choosing what supreme justice positions are voted on in which elections, the poor quality of the explanatory statement, the political comments by the Attorney General that raise concerns about the delegitimization and weaponization of the state court system, and other concerns that come about if SCR1611 is carefully scrutinized instead of haphazardly rushed.

Conclusion

Amending the Constitution is a serious matter. Fundamentally changing the Kansas Judiciary would be the most significant action the legislature could take this biennium and it will have long lasting effects that deserve thoughtful consideration, ample public notice, and reasonable deadlines to allow public input. For all these reasons and more, we urge the committee to oppose SCR1611.