



Written Testimony in Opposition to HB 2227

**House Elections Committee
Wednesday, March 13, 2013**

Mr. Chairman and House Elections Committee Members:

My name is Jennifer Bruning, and I am Vice President of Government Affairs with the Overland Park Chamber of Commerce. I am submitting written testimony today in opposition to House Bill 2227, which would make all elections of community college trustees partisan and move all municipal elections (including cities, extension districts, boards of public utilities, water districts, drainage districts, irrigation districts, unified school districts, and community colleges) from the spring of odd-numbered years to the fall of odd-numbered years beginning January 1, 2014.

The Overland Park Chamber believes that partisan politics are irrelevant to providing local services such as the management of a community college, and that choosing the form of government to manage these matters should be left up to local leaders. An emphasis on partisanship at the community college trustee level could lead to Washington-style gridlock, rather than allowing this local unit of government to focus upon fiscal prudence and delivery of essential services such as setting the college's budget, properly maintaining college property, and adopting college policies. Local elected officials should be chosen based upon their qualifications for office rather than if they have an "R" or "D" behind their name. Our current non-partisan system of electing community college trustees decreases political polarization and encourages cooperation between elected officials belonging to different parties, making consensus on big issues more likely.

Johnson County's non-partisan election system for ALL local units of government (including JCCC Trustees) works well and is revered. In 2012 the Johnson County Charter Commission completed its required ten-year review of its charter. As part of the review the Commission held public hearings on whether there should be partisan elections for local units of government within the County. Dozens of citizens testified that the current system of non-partisan elections should be upheld; the Charter Commission agreed by not forwarding amendments that would change the system. This Charter Commission decision should be allowed to stand.

We urge you to oppose House Bill 2227. Thank you for your consideration.