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Testimony before the
House Committee on Elections
on
HB 2227 – Municipal Elections (November of Odd-numbered Years)

by
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Kansas Association of School Board Region 3 Vice-President

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Mr. Chair, Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on **HB 2227**. This bill would move the election date for all local elections from April of odd-numbered years to November of odd-numbered years. It would also have board member take office in January, rather than July.

I was a participant at KASB's Delegate Assembly this past December. There was much support to approve a resolution called "*First in Education, the Kansas Way*". This resolution, which was overwhelmingly adopted, includes the following statement: "We believe public engagement in school district governance is best served by electing local board members in non-partisan April elections, rather than the November general elections."

As a local school board member, and Region 3 Vice President of KASB, I oppose the change in this bill. The current system defines the school board term to coincide with the school year and fiscal year. Currently, new school board members are elected in April, and do not take office until July. This allows for several months of orientation. July is also when the new fiscal year begins. As a local school board member, I personally attest to the benefit of new board member training, as well as participating in board meetings as a "vested spectator" prior to taking office. New elected school board members in July have several months to collect data necessary for superintendent evaluations and prepare for teacher negotiations.

Having board elections in November and bringing newly elected board members seven months into the school's fiscal year, and less than 6 months into most academic year has the potential for poor decision making. Boards throughout the state may be faced with newly elected members having less than a month to gather information and participate effectively in evaluations and be prepared for teacher negotiations. I ask each of you to consider the scenario of any job you have had. Would you rather have an evaluation from a boss that has known you and your work record for several months, or one?

An addition of school board members to the November ballot would add confusion to voters. Voters often vote for a candidate based on party affiliation. Although school board elections may show lower numbers of voters, those voters are more informed, and are more vested in their local school districts. School board candidates are allowed to speak at individualized debates, to address the needs of

the districts in a non-partisan method. Adding school board members to a particular party may give the notion that if a particular organization endorses said candidate, decisions made as a board member may also “sway” to the benefit of participants of that organization. That is *not* the intended role of a school board member.

There is an old saying that is used often. “If it isn’t broken, then don’t try fixing it”. The current system of school board elections is not broken, so please don’t try fixing it.

Thank you for your consideration.