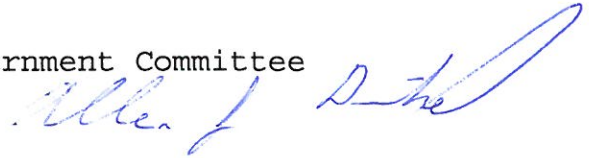


***“Small Town, Big Dreams”***

THE CITY OF NEODESHA • P O BOX 336 • NEODESHA • KANSAS • 66757

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February 21, 2013

To: Senate Ethics, Elections and Local Government Committee  
From: Allen J. Dinkel, City Administrator   
RE: Opposition to SB 211

Thank-you for the opportunity to submit comments in opposition to SB 211.

I understand that one reason for the proposed legislation is this would increase voter turnout. I would not argue that could occur, but in Cities or School Districts where there is often less people running the turnout will be low. We can't forget that School Board members do not receive compensation and in cities it varies from City to City but usually substantially less than say a County Commissioner. In my 24 years of City Government I have seen low turnout but also high turnout of voters depending on how many people and who are running.

When I was City Manager in Hoisington the Council members were elected by Wards. One year there was a light turnout of voters and a certain person won the election. Two years later this person ran as an incumbent and the voter turnout in that Ward shot up to the 70 to 75 percent level since the voters did not want the incumbent to return to the Council.

If City and school elections would be moved to the fall I fear local issues would take "second" behind State and Federal issues. With the present elections held in the spring the local issues are the primary focus of the voters.

Some cities in the State elect three people each election with the top three vote earners being elected. In many Commission-Manager forms of government the top two receive a four year term and the third place vote getter receives a two year term. In other cities there may be five being elected at-large to the governing body. In Neodesha we have a three member Governing Body with each person serving a three year term and so one person is elected each year. This rotation has proven to work well for Neodesha and insures a

majority of the Governing Body has some experience to understand the many issues of the City and better serve the needs of the voters. The proposed bill will strip the City of Neodesha from continuing the three year terms they have utilized for many years and was chosen by the citizens of Neodesha and not mandated by the State of Kansas.

For Federal, State, and County elections only one person is elected for each office.

I understand this bill suggests that all those City Officials including those who will be elected this April would be removed from office even though in the case of Neodesha the Mayor will be elected for a term expiring in 2016. In addition Neodesha will have an election in April of 2014 for a present term that expires then. Again it appears that person would be removed from that position later in 2014. Also we would have another commissioner that would have her term cut short by about three months. The voters in Neodesha choose to have Commissioner Nichol serve a three year term, not one of 33 months.

City elections in Kansas are non-partisan. This bill would mandate partisan elections for cities. I would suggest to you that City issues are local issues and are not a matter of which political party you belong to. In Neodesha the issues which the Governing Body bill deals with include five utilities (electric, water, natural gas, sanitation, and sewer), fire, police, emergency services, parks, streets, swimming pools, tennis courts, playgrounds, Library, and industrial development to name a few. These issues are now well served by a non-partisan governing body and changing to a partisan position would not enhance that.

In addition there will be so much confusion at the polls if City elections were to be moved to the fall. In the case of cities of the Second Class with a Mayor-Council form of Government the Council wards may or may not be the same as districts for other positions being elected on at the same time.

In summary, the City of Neodesha feels the present system of spring elections each year along with a non-partisan selection best serves the needs of this City and the desires of our citizens. No change is warranted or would be beneficial to the City of Neodesha.