



**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE KANSAS SENATE ETHICS, ELECTIONS AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE
REGARDING SB 211 AND SB 145**

Wednesday March 13, 2013, 9:30 AM

LINDA REED, CITY OF OTTAWA CITY COMMISSIONER

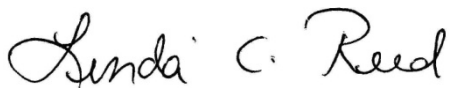
Thank you, Honorable Chair Senator Dennis Pyle, Honorable Vice Chair Senator Mitch Holmes, Honorable Ranking Minority Leader Senator Oleta Faust-Goudeau, Honorable committee members and staff. I am Ottawa City Commissioner Linda Reed and I am here today to testify as an opponent of SB 211 and SB 145. I have just completed five years on the City of Ottawa Commission and have been proud to represent our citizens and community in those years. I am running for re-election even as we speak. I served one year as the Mayor and have been through the election process on multiple occasions, as my husband also served twelve years on the USD 290 school board. I am opposed to SB 211 and SB 145 for the following reasons:

1. I do not believe that anyone will benefit by making city commission/council or school board positions partisan. These positions have historically been non-partisan so that the elected officials can serve their constituents in the most equitable and broad manner possible. Making these elections partisan will put stumbling blocks in front of elected officials that will dramatically hinder their ability to serve without prejudice. These positions have plenty enough to deal with and worry about without having to make sure that their party affiliation is represented as well. By tying these offices to political positions, the law will force commissioners and school board members to consider their political affiliation over and above what is best for their constituents. We do not need to introduce divisive politics into units of government that already work together smoothly and function well as non-partisan.
2. I believe that moving these elections to the fall, along with the other elections will not allow citizens to be well-informed about all of the candidates. Typically our community holds candidate forums so that our citizens can become informed about the candidates for office. By the time that all County, State and Federal candidates are presented there will most likely be no audience left to listen. The higher office and typically more controversial candidates will overshadow the city and school board elections. Larger issues such as healthcare reform and national debt will overshadow such important local issues as the quality of our city streets and sidewalks, local economic development, and quality of life issues in our cities.

3. In addition, there will be extra confusion and lengthier ballots leading to voter dissatisfaction. Two page ballots will not work in most ballot systems currently in place in Kansas. Longer times in the voting booth will most likely occur and lead toward more voter frustration and likely lower voter turnouts.
4. The cost incurred by a local candidate for school board or city commission will most likely become a negative influence on persons willing to run. The parties wishing to be elected will have undue influence from the various political parties and the focus of true issues of importance may be lost in the political rhetoric.
5. I believe that the passage of this bill signals a mandate from the state in an issue that should remain under local rule. These city and school board positions are meant to work collaboratively together and involving politics into the mix might work in some larger communities but would be detrimental to most Kansas cities and communities.
6. I respect the efforts both to increase voter participation and to save money, both which are sorely needed, but I believe the small benefits gained would be overshadowed by the negative effects I've stated above. This type of move would serve only to politicize city commissions that currently work well in representing the good of the entire city or community. The small amount of gain would be greatly overshadowed by the large trade-offs required.

Again, I speak on behalf of my City Commission in opposition to SB 211 and SB 145. I appreciate your time and courtesy in listening to my views on this matter.

Thank you.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Linda C. Reed". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Linda Reed
City Commissioner
City of Ottawa, Kansas