

March 13, 2013

## **Senate Ethics, Elections, and Local Government Committee Testimony in Opposition to Senate Bill 211**

Chairman Pyle and Members of the Committee.

I am Gene Johnson, Superintendent of the Shawnee Mission School District #512.

Currently, Shawnee Mission School District Board of Education members are elected during spring elections and seek office on a non-partisan basis. We oppose Senate Bill 211 because it will have a number of impacts our Board believes will not be beneficial.

- We support non-partisan elections because our board of education, patrons, and taxpayers support a selection of school board leadership based on the community's genuine interest in education issues, not partisan affiliation.
- We support retaining elections in the spring because the issues discussed, in conjunction with other local government elections, are focused on our local communities and not larger state or national political issues, which is more typical during the fall cycle.
  - We do recognize that voter turnout is lower in spring elections. That is not unexpected due to the absence of higher-level offices on the ticket. However, the electorate who does participate demonstrates an interest in and support of non-partisan elections that focus on education issues, not partisanship and national issues.
- We also support retaining spring elections because it allows newly elected board members to take their position with the Board at the conclusion of the current school year ready for the start of a new school year. A fall election cycle, with new board members taking office mid-school year, presents challenges we would prefer to avoid.

I would be happy to stand for questions at the appropriate time.