

Testimony to Senate Judiciary Committee
Judicial Selection Process
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On behalf of The Greater Kansas City Chamber Of Commerce
January 17, 2013

Chairman King and Other Honorable Senators:

This written testimony is given on behalf of The Greater Kansas City Chamber Of Commerce, an organization with over 2,500 members, 40% in Kansas (a larger percentage of our board lives in Kansas). Our public policy agenda has for many years contained a standing position supporting the current merit based or non-partisan system of selecting judges in Kansas. Our members believe the current system has served the business community well and there is no sufficient reason to change the system. The current Constitutional Article was adopted in 1958 after public outcry when a defeated Governor resigned early and had himself appointed to the Supreme Court.

The Chamber is not opposed to restructuring the existing nonpartisan nominating commission. It could certainly be changed to allow more public members (non-attorneys), and/or to permit involvement of more elected officials, for instance.

The Chamber also believes the legislature needs to give considerable thought before passing Constitutional Amendments and other legislation binding on future legislatures. Kansas has alternated between Republican and Democratic Governors for at least the last 40 years. Certainly some gubernatorial appointments in that time have been persons rejected as unqualified or having conflicts of interest. In the case of the Supreme Court, protracted disagreement over appointments could leave the Court without a majority capable of deciding some critical cases. In short, even the delay possible in this process is of concern.

Thank you for the opportunity to express our concerns about changes in the judicial selection process.