



**KANSAS ASSOCIATION
OF SCHOOL BOARDS**

Serving Educational Leaders, Inspiring Student Success

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Testimony before the
House Committee on Elections
on
HB 2185

by

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Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee:

The Kansas Association of School Boards strongly supports intergovernmental cooperation between local school boards and other local officials, including local election officers. We believe decisions about that cooperation should be made by those closest to the people: those same local officials and the voters who elect them. We respectfully oppose **HB 2185** because it imposes state mandates in two ways.

First, it requires that “All school districts **shall make suitable school buildings** available for polling places at the request of the county election officer...” While districts want to be helpful if possible, they must balance school security and other educational and extracurricular activities scheduled that day. The bill as written does not give any flexibility for the school board.

Second, subsection “c” states that if the school district has been notified that one or more of its buildings is needed as polling places, the district “**shall** schedule a training day for teachers on the date of the election.” The bill does not specify whether this would apply to all teachers in the district, or only those in the buildings used as polling places.

This means that the county election officer would be able to override the school schedule for students, which is usually set a year in advance; the teacher schedule for training days, which may impact the district’s negotiated agreement; and the schedule for parents, as well.

Even if a teacher training day is scheduled on election day, it does not mean students would be excluded from the school building for other purposes. This would raise concerns about the safety and security of the building - which we believe are the primary reasons districts may not be able to make buildings available in the first place.

Kansas has a strong tradition of local control and home rule for both schools and local governments. The people of Kansas in Article 6 of the Kansas Constitution said the local public schools are to be “maintained, developed and operated by locally elected boards.” We believe the use of public school buildings should fall under that authority. Local school boards are the appropriate body to balance access to public buildings with security for students and staff. If there is a disagreement over this balance, both schools and local election officers are subject to the local voters. That is where these disagreements should be resolved.

Thank you for your consideration.