



City of Lawrence KANSAS

CITY COMMISSION

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MIKE AMYX

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JEREMY FARMER
DR. TERRY RIORDAN
ROBERT J. SCHUMM
MICHAEL DEVER

DAVID L. CORLISS
CITY MANAGER

City Offices
Box 708 66044-0708
TDD 785-832-3205
www.lawrenceks.org

6 East 6th
785-832-3000
FAX 785-832-3405

March 9, 2015

Representative Mark Kahrs
Chair, House Committee on Elections
State Capitol, Room 286-N
Topeka, KS 66612

Re: Senate Substitute for Senate Bill 171

Dear Chairman Kahrs and House Election Committee Members:

On behalf of the City of Lawrence, I am writing to express our opposition to the Substitute SB 171. The City of Lawrence opposes moving local elections from the Spring to the Fall. Moving municipal elections to the fall will diminish media coverage and attention on important local issues. Voters will focus on state and national races, and may not devote sufficient time to educate and inform themselves on local candidates and local issues. Forums focused on local candidates and local issues, and local campaign literature will get lost amid all of the other campaigns. Furthermore, the ballots will become longer and more complicated and could further frustrate and confuse voters. Local elected officials make many, many important decisions that impact the daily lives of local voters. Changing election laws to make it harder for voters to focus on individual local races is not good public policy.

Furthermore, this bill completely eliminates the entire long standing statutory framework for the City Manager form of government in Kansas. The bill, in its current form, is a substantial defeat for all Kansas cities, and is perhaps the worst thing to happen to Kansas cities in decades. It is not enough to adopt an ordinance or resolution creating the city-manager / commission framework. Voters in cities around the state have enacted this form of government – to disregard that voter approval is not acceptable. What can be enacted by an ordinance – can be taken away by an ordinance. What is approved by the voters – a form of government for professional management – should only be taken away by voters.

Finally, the City opposes language in the bill that limits municipalities from holding bond or sales tax elections on dates other than August or November. Such a measure unnecessarily restricts local democracy and local needs of communities. Please keep the current laws in place, and reject Substitute SB 171 entirely. Contact David Corliss at 785-832-3400 if you have questions.

Sincerely,

Mike Amyx
Mayor

C: City Commission
David L. Corliss, City Manager



We are committed to providing excellent city services that enhance the quality of life for the Lawrence Community