



**KANSAS ASSOCIATION
OF SCHOOL BOARDS**

Serving Educational Leaders, Inspiring Student Success

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Testimony before the
House Committee on Elections
on
SB 171 - Local Elections

by

Rod Stewart, President

March 11, 2015

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on **SB 171**. I am serving this year as President of the Kansas Association of School Boards, having been elected by the KASB Delegate Assembly. I am also the vice president of the Washington County USD 108 Board of Education, a consolidated district serving the students in our north central Kansas county.

KASB opposes changing local school board elections. This position was affirmed by school board members attending our annual Delegate Assembly last December as part of our priority resolution. In addition, nearly 200 school districts have informed us that they have passed official resolution or statements opposing a change.

KASB supports the provision in this bill that keeps school board elections non-partisan.

- Partisan elections could make school board elections and governing more divisive. We do not believe Kansas wants more partisanship in local governance.
- Partisan elections would bar federal executive branch and military employees from running for office and serving their communities by holding local office.
- School governance should be based on coming together to solve problems and improve education.

- Political parties are free to recruit, identify and support candidates who align with their beliefs, even if candidates do not run on a party line.

KASB opposes moving school board elections from the April to November.

- School board members should continue to take office July 1, after a Spring election, with the start of a new school year and budget year, rather than assuming office in the middle of the academic and fiscal year.

KASB opposes moving school board elections to November of even-numbered years.

- School board candidates and issues would receive less attention if competing with federal, state, county and judicial elections on the same, lengthy ballot.

KASB believes how and when school buildings are used should be decided at the local level.

- However, if this provision is included, we support requiring a one-year notice as provided in this bill and approved by this committee on another bill earlier this session.

In conclusion, KASB believes the current system works well.

- Opinion polls show local governance currently has the highest trust of any level of government. A Gallup poll found Kansans have among the highest levels of satisfaction with their schools in the nation.
- Kansas schools ranks among the top states in student achievement while spending at the national average; evidence of efficient and effective use of public resources under the current non-partisan system.
- There are other ways to increase voter turnout, such as mail ballot elections, Saturday voting, moving Spring elections several weeks later, and local efforts to educate voters.

Thank you for your consideration.