

1

STATE OF KANSAS
SENATE

STATE CAPITOL
300 S.W. TENTH STREET
TOPEKA, KS 66612
(785) 296-7667
mitch.holmes@senate.ks.gov



DISTRICT ADDRESS:
211 S.E. 20TH AVE.
ST. JOHN, KS 67576
(620) 234-5834

MITCH HOLMES

33RD DISTRICT

BARTON, EDWARDS, HODGEMAN, KIOWA, LANE, NESS,
PAWNEE, PRATT, RICE, RUSH, SCOTT & STAFFORD COUNTIES

Testimony in support of
SB 171
March 11, 2015

Senate Bill 171, aka the Help Kansas Vote Act, is designed to foster a culture of voting in Kansas. The idea isn't to merely increase voter turnout, but to increase the number of informed voters, and to encourage the next generation of voters. Every feature has its root in the desire to reverse the trend of voter apathy.

SB 171 is the result of an in-depth interim study of the benefits and/or drawbacks of establishing a uniform election date. We heard from NCSL, The Democracy Project, a university professor who has done an extensive study of the politics *and* empirical data related to election timing, election officials from various Kansas counties, panels of election officials from two other states with uniform election dates (NE, UT), and a vendor of election technology.

After hearing from multiple sources, it was obvious that a number of so-called drawbacks identified by opponents were not drawbacks at all. Other concerns that were determined to be genuine challenges can be effectively mitigated through the use of intelligent policy changes or offset by technology. The panels from both NE and UT were in agreement that the "cons" were not the barriers that opponents would have us believe.

The biggest concerns from KS election officials were ballot length and ballot styles. SB171 addresses both of these concerns by authorizing flexibility in formatting ballots to avoid page breaks, and doing away with non-partisan races (in original bill). Eliminating ballot rotation will also reduce the number of ballot styles significantly.

Making precinct positions a 4-year term was done at the suggestion of the Secretary of State in order to reduce ballot length in the gubernatorial cycle when statewide offices are also on the ballot.

/

“Un-informed voters” is a repeated theme among opponents. According to NCSL, a uniform election cycle naturally increases information available to voters. However, we went a step further than counting on natural consequences and proactively direct the creation of voter education efforts by the Secretary of State’s office, and SB171 also directs the SOS to make advance sample ballots available online and through a downloadable app.

One of the big concerns from cities was the need for annual elections to allow for staggered terms and/or 3-year terms. SB171 provides for annual elections for those cities that need them.

While hearing from election officials, another problem was uncovered. County clerks in the more populated areas are finding it increasingly difficult to obtain polling locations. Because of this discovery, a clause was added to require public schools to provide polling facilities if needed by local election officials. In its current state, a clerk must request a facility 365 days in advance to allow schools plenty of planning time.

The use of school facilities serves another purpose than just certainty for county clerks, and that is to get school aged children into the routine of “election day” every November. Also along the philosophy of fostering a culture of voting, the bill authorizes the increased use of 16 and 17 year old poll workers.

NCSL testified that election timing bills have about half the success rate of being signed into law than state legislation in general. Sarah Anzia, Ph. D. (author of Timing and Turnout), attributes this to the pressure brought on by special interests that benefit from the status quo.

NCSL, Dr. Anzia, and the two panels testified that on-cycle elections are preferred by the masses. Both panels expressed satisfaction with their system and stated their public loved their election cycles. Both panels explicitly stated that the “drawbacks” we had identified weren’t viewed by them as drawbacks. One panel asked, “What are you waiting for? Just do it. Your people will love it.” This is in stark contrast to the gloom and doom predicted by the opponents.

In conclusion, SB171 was not thrown together on a whim. It is meant to be a multi-pronged strategy to foster a culture of informed voters in the current and next generation. It was drafted after in-depth study and makes an effort to address all legitimate concerns. There may be “new” concerns surface as the opposition desperately seeks to kill this bill. I ask the committee to use your minds and think intelligently about contrived “reasons” that might be used to justify elections that “fly under the radar.” I ask your support for SB171.

Election Timing Data

2014 Special Committee on Ethics, Elections and Local Government

Prepared for
House Committee on Elections
March 11, 2015

Pro

- Would increase voter turnout; encourage greater participation in local elections by combining with state and national elections. (True)
- Would result in cost savings by streamlining elections. (False or negligible savings)
- Would increase visibility and importance of local elections, resulting in more informed voters. (True)

Con

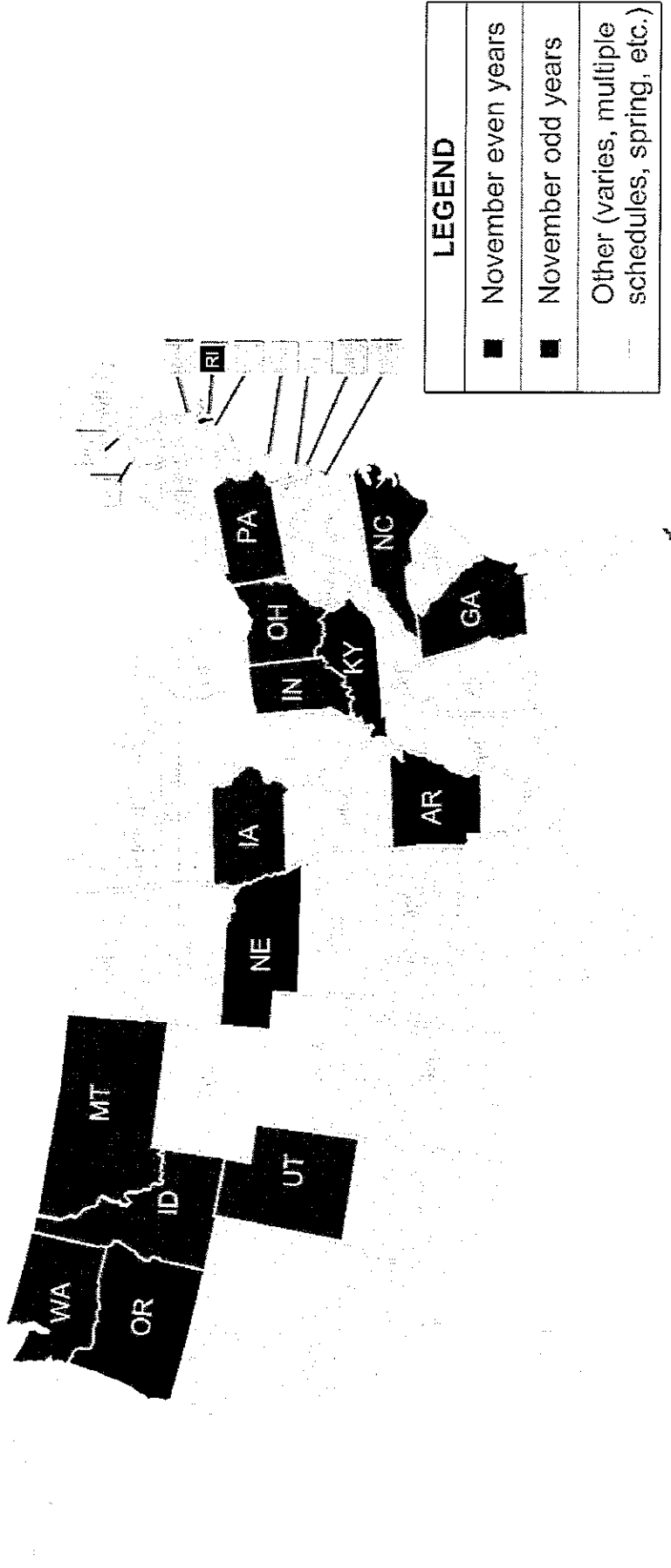
- Lengthier ballots (True)
- More difficult to manage elections (True)
- Would add confusion for voters (No Evidence)
- Would preclude voters from becoming informed about candidates (False)
- More costly for candidates (Possible)
- Would shift, not reduce costs, resulting in every-other-year, “feast or famine” budgets. (Possible)

State	State Elections	County Elections	Municipal Elections	School Elections
AL	November / Even	November / Even	August / Even	Varies ¹
AK	November / Even	October / All ²	October / All ³	Varies
AZ	November / Even	November / Even	Multiple schedules	November / Even
AR	November / Even	November / Even	November / Even	September / All
CA	November / Even	June / Even	Multiple schedules ⁴	Multiple schedules
CO	November / Even	N/A	Multiple schedules	November / Odd
CT	November / Even	N/A	Multiple schedules	Multiple schedules
DE	November / Even	November / Even	Varies	May / All
FL	November / Even	November / Even	Varies	November / Even
GA	November / Even	November / Even	November / Odd	Multiple schedules ⁵
HI	November / Even	November / Even	N/A	N/A
ID	November / Even	November / Even	November / Odd	May / Odd
IL	November / Even	November / Even	April / Odd ⁶	April / Odd
IN	November / Even	November / Even	November / Odd	November / Even
IA	November / Even	November / Even	November / Odd	September / Odd
KS	November / Even	November / Even	April / Odd	April / Odd
KY	November / All ⁷	November / Even	November / Even	November / Even ⁸
LA	November / Odd	November / Odd ⁹	Multiple schedules	November / Even ¹⁰
ME	November / Even	November / Even	Varies	Varies
MD	November / Even	November / Even	Varies	November / Even
MA	November / Even	November / Even	Varies ¹¹	Varies ¹²
MI	November / Even	November / Even	Multiple schedules	November / Even
MN	November / Even	November / Even	Multiple schedules	Multiple schedules ¹⁴
MS	November / Odd	November / Odd	June / Odd ¹³	Multiple schedules ¹⁴
MO	November / Even	November / Even	April / All	April / All ¹⁵
MT	November / Even	November / Even	November / Odd	May / All
NE	November / Even	November / Even	November / Even ¹⁶	November / Even ¹⁷
NV	November / Even	November / Even	Multiple schedules	November / Even
NH	November / Even	November / Even	Varies ¹⁸	Varies
NJ	November / Odd	November / All	Multiple schedules	Multiple schedules
NM	November / Even	November / Even	March / Even ¹⁹	February / Odd
NY	November / Even	November / All ²⁰	Varies ²¹	May / All ²²
NC	November / Even	November / Even	November / Odd ²³	Varies ²⁴
ND	November / Even	November / Even	June / Even	Varies
OH	November / Even	November / Even	November / Odd	November / Odd
OK	November / Even	November / Even	April / Odd ²⁵	February / All
OR	November / Even	November / Even	November / Even	May / Odd
PA	November / Even	November / Odd	November / Odd	November / Odd ²⁷
RJ	November / Even	N/A	November / Even ²⁶	November / Even
SC	November / Even	November / Even	Varies ²⁸	Varies
SD	November / Even	November / Even	Varies ²⁹	Varies

- County school boards are elected in November of even years; city school boards that are elected hold elections at various times throughout the year.
- Alaska has boroughs rather than counties.
- Anchorage holds its elections in April.
- Charter cities can choose their election dates.
- County school board elections are held during state general or primary elections; municipal school board elections are in November of odd years or during primaries.
- Chicago holds elections in February of odd years.
- Statewide offices are elected in odd years; legislative offices are elected in even years.
- Independent school districts that embrace a fifth class city can hold elections in May.
- Orleans Parish is an exception.

NCSL Presentation

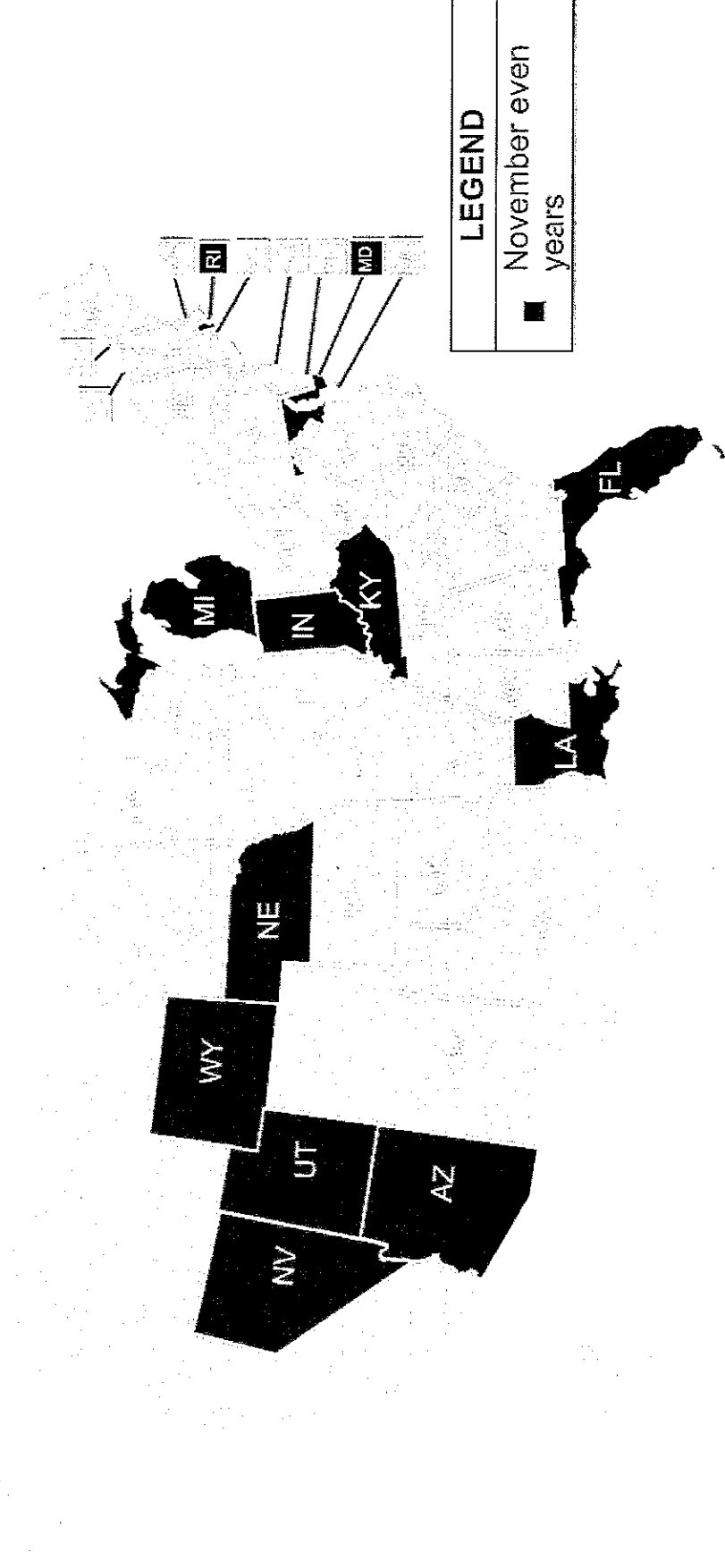
Municipal Elections



*data courtesy of Timing & Turnout (Anzia)

NCSL Presentation

School Board Elections



*data courtesy of Timing & Turnout (Anzia)

General Purpose Govt

State	Total local Govt	General Purpose	Special Purpose	Total Per 100K	General Per 100K	Special Per 100K
Illinois	6,968	2,831	4,137	54.1	22.0	32.1
Minnesota	3,633	2,726	907	68.0	51.0	17.0
Pennsylvania	4,905	2,627	2,278	38.5	20.6	17.9
Ohio	3,702	2,334	1,368	32.1	20.2	11.8
Kansas	3,806	1,997	1,809	132.6	69.6	63.0

General Govt Per 100K Population

State	Total local Govt	General Purpose		Special Purpose		Total Per 100K		General Per 100K		Special Per 100K	
North Dakota	2,666	1,724	942			389.8		252.1		137.7	
South Dakota	1,979	1,284	695			240.1		155.8		84.3	
Kansas	3,806	1,997	1,809			132.6		69.6		63.0	
Nebraska	2,581	1,042	1,539			140.1		56.5		83.5	
Minnesota	3,633	2,726	907			68.0		51.0		17.0	

Most government is local government

- 3,806 governments in KS
- FTE
 - K12: ~69,000 FTE - 85,752 KPERs covered
 - Local: 39,088 KPERs covered
- \$? Billion in revenue (2014)
 - K12: \$5.9 Billion
 - Counties: \$1.7 Billion
 - Cities: \$?
- Over 6,000 elected officials
 - K12: 1,998
 - Cities: ~3,800
- Most are not elected on “Election Day”



KIPERS Overview

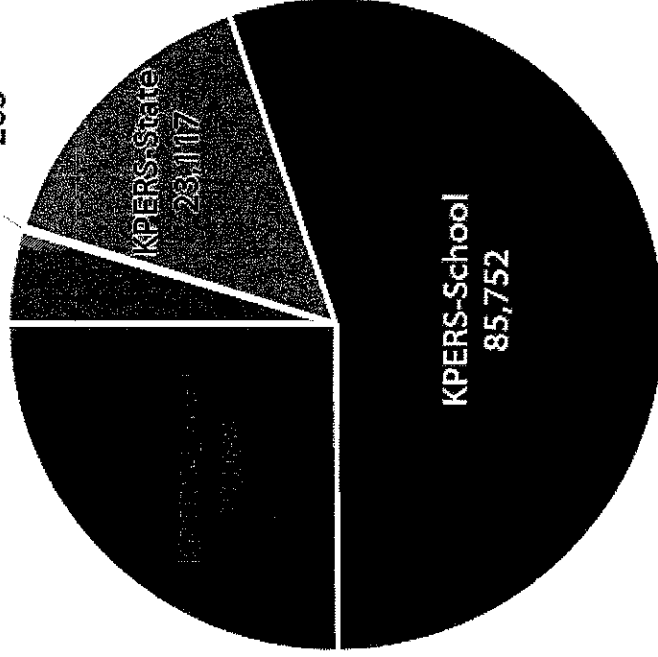
Active KIPERS Membership

Active KIPERS Membership

CY 2013

KP&F
7,224

Judges
265



Total: 155,446

- More than half of active members employed by school districts
- Average current age
 - KIPERS – 45.5
 - KP&F – 39.6
 - Judges – 57.8
- Average years of service
 - KIPERS – 11.3 years
 - KP&F – 11.8 years
 - Judges – 11.7 years

NCSL Presentation

Down-Ballot Turnout in Municipal Elections: California

City	Election Type	Citywide Turnout	Down-Ballot Turnout
San Francisco	Non-Consolidated November 2011 General Election	43%	40%
San Jose	Consolidated November 2010 General Election	64%	57%

City	Election Type	Citywide Turnout	Down-Ballot Turnout
Los Angeles	Non-Consolidated May 2013 General Election	23%	17%
San Diego	Consolidated June 2012 Primary Election	39%	37%

*data courtesy of Greenlining Institute

NCSL Presentation

- In a 2008 study, 70 percent of voters favored local elections at the same time as national elections*
- Consistency and predictability
- Culture of November voting
- Trend is to move to uniform dates
- No trend to move back to off-cycle by states that now have on-cycle

*According to a question in the Cooperative Congressional Election Study in 2008

Do American voters want off-cycle elections?

	<i>Democrat</i>	<i>Republican</i>	<i>Independent</i>
Different day	27%	39%	35%
Same day	73%	61%	65%
Total	100%	100%	100%

“Support for on-cycle election scheduling did not vary with respondent age, sex, education level, race, or ethnicity.”

Panel Discussion - Utah

“Taking school boards off the ballots of even numbered years would not make our task easier”

Panel Discussion - Nebraska

- School Board & Municipal in even-year
- Voter Drop-off not with races, but rather:
 - amendments
 - bond issues
 - sales tax increases
 - other special races

Panel Discussion - Nebraska

- Panelists saw no problems with combined elections:
 - Good Voter Registration System
 - Poll worker training
 - Other Provisions in Place

Summary of the book's argument

- Shifting from on-cycle to off-cycle election timing increases the electoral presence of *the organized*:
 - 1) People with a large stake in an election turn out at high rates regardless of timing, and many are members of organized groups.
 - 2) Off-cycle election timing enhances the effectiveness of organized groups' mobilization efforts.
- Organized groups should be more successful in securing favorable policies in governments with off-cycle elections.

History of election timing choice

- In early 19th century, off-cycle city elections were recognized as having significant effect on voter turnout.
- Local Political parties began manipulating the timing of city elections as early as the 1840s.
- Many off-cycle elections have been in place since early 1900's due to vehement opposition to change.