

Chairman Mitch Holmes , Vice-Chair Steve Fitzgerald, Ranking Minority Member Sen. Oletha Faust-Goudeau , and members of the Senate Ethics & Elections Committee:

I am testifying today as a citizen and not necessarily as a representative of the Sedgwick County Commission. Some of my opinion however, is reflected in the updated Sedgwick County Legislative Platform. I come before you today as a Partisan Local Elected Official winning my election last fall. My place on the ballot was on the last page behind the judges. I do not bring any concern or criticism regarding my place on the ballot, my race being partisan, or having to campaign alongside the bigger races.

The reasons I am supporting The Help Kansas Vote Act, are many. The most significant proposal, moving the spring elections to the even numbered years in the fall time-frame as other partisan elections is a critical change. This is the largest factor and the key to increasing voter turnout. Increasing voter turnout is one of the stated goals of the Secretary of State. Here is an example: I live in the city of Derby and in the last election, one of the council wards received a total of 86 votes representing 7600 constituents. I call this broken if not pitiful. This is not that much different than many other non-partisan elected incumbents races. The participation rates are sometimes as little as 1.5% of the constituents taking the time to vote. One reason I believe is a lack of knowledge of who is on the ballot or local issues.

I am indifferent on the single-button partisan selection option, however, I would encourage you to consider reversing the order of the ballot such that the smaller races are at the beginning and the largest races are at the bottom. This brings greater attention to the smaller races which is one of the concerns I continue to hear from many of the current non-partisan elected incumbents.

During the last four years in Derby, only one non-partisan candidate filed a campaign finance report meaning only one non-partisan candidate raised and spent \$500+ to get their message out. Bear in mind these boards together control nearly \$115M of spending. This fact illustrates that the level of effort is fairly low to attain considerable appropriation authority.

Some other reasons impacting spring elections include the weather. In the winter/spring, it is many times cold and snowy or icy. The daylight hours are also short making it difficult to interface voters at the door. If I knocked on your door at 7 PM tonight to talk about the election when it's dark and about 20 degrees, I don't think you would appreciate answering the door in this circumstance or would welcome much discussion with the door open and heat escaping. In my nearly 17 years in my current home, not one non-partisan candidate has ever

visited my door and I have never received a call or single piece of mail telling me about the candidate. Frankly, the average level of effort to win one of these elections or to retain incumbency is lower than Kansas's deserve. It's difficult to fix this low turnout and apathy/indifference without discussing these issues around the issue.

Finally, probably the most important aspect deals with the issue of the mailing deadline for our military members which is 45 days prior to the election. On January 27, the spring deadline was only 42 days before the primary election. There are only four weeks between the primary and the general. Once again, this does not provide sufficient time to comply with federal law. Please understand that something has to change.

I do support making the elections partisan because this is one way to help determine whether or not a candidate tends to agree with the voter's personal political ideology. Understanding someone's political ideology is relevant to both city and school elected positions.

For all the reasons I have given, it is my opinion that the fall timeframe provides the best opportunities for the electorate to interface the candidates on the ballot. Please move ALL the spring elections and not just city/school position races. Leaving any races in the spring will generate even less participation than what they get currently.

Regarding home-rule and whether the state should make state-wide policy, the legislature certainly has the right and authority to make this change. In fact, the reasons elections are in the spring as they currently are, is not because small jurisdictions chose this but because the state previously mandated our current time and methods of elections. It is also certainly reasonable to reconsider and change the state's policy when there is new information or constraints such as the federal mandate to mail military ballots 45 days before the election.

In summary: this proposal makes sense. It saves money, increases the quality and participation in Kansas elections, solves the current overseas military mail ballot deadline issues, and allows the voters to have a better understanding about whom they are electing.

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