

Senate Committee on Ethics and Elections

February 11, 2015

**In Opposition to
SB 171-Elections; municipalities and special districts; spring to fall; other changes**

**By Gary Yost, School Board Member, Otis-Bison USD 403
KASB Board of Directors**

Mr. Chair, Members of the Committee:

Since Nebraska was used as an example of combined elections I contacted a friend of mine who now lives in Gothenburg Nebraska. She is an ex board member of Otis-Bison USD #403.

I asked her how long their ballot was in November. She said it was 5 pages long. I then asked if she thought most people would finish the ballot or just vote for the major offices. Her response "I think just the major offices. Dave and I were pretty aware of most of the items on the ballot, but there were still 7 elected positions that we were dumbstruck about. It's pretty overwhelming even when you follow politics."

I said that we had been afraid that local elections would become trivial. Her response was "Yep. Unless it's a heated or highly contested local race, it gets buried in the ballot. Greensburg has 17,400 registered voters and they only had 1,600 ballots cast for BOE this last election. Cozad had a heated election going and actually had an 85% turnout." We feel that the time of the election does not matter; rather it is the issues and candidates' positions that determine voter turnout.

Another big issue will be the fact that you could have 4 or 5 new board members coming in on Jan 1 who have not been involved in the budget and it's issues and having to make critical decisions with no or very little background. We are having a difficult time this year because of all the cuts and we have all been on the board for at least 2 years. It takes time to gain an understanding of what is involved in a school budget. Many things are influenced by Federal and State law and as well as the wishes of the local patrons.

Thank you.