



February 11, 2015

Senate Ethics and Elections Committee

Sen. Mitch Holmes (R-33), Chair, Mitch.Holmes@senate.ks.gov

Sen. Steve Fitzgerald (R-5), Vice Chair, Steve.Fitzgerald@senate.ks.gov

Sen. Michael O'Donnell (R-25), Michael.ODonnell@senate.ks.gov

Sen. Oletha Faust-Goudeau (D-29), Ranking Minority Member,

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Sen. David Haley (D-4), David.Haley@senate.ks.gov

Sen. Garrett Love (R-38), Garrett.Love@senate.ks.gov

Sen. Tom Arpke (R-24), Tom.Arpke@senate.ks.gov

Sen. Susan Wagle (R-30), Susan.Wagle@senate.ks.gov

Sen. Kay Wolf (R-7), Kay.Wolf@senate.ks.gov

Dear Honorable Members of the Senate Ethics and Elections Committee:

I am here as Chairman of the Johnson and Wyandotte Counties Council of Mayors, representing over 727,000 Kansans (25% of the State's population), to voice our opposition to SB171 that would alter the existing election process for cities in Kansas. I believe the current cycle better serves the people of Kansas for the following reasons:

- 1) The cost of "getting your message out" is much less in April and many of these local (April cycle) elected jobs receive no compensation to help offset the cost. Competing with other high profile campaigns would reduce contributions to fund local campaigns. This is particularly important in small municipalities across the state and could work to restrict the pool of candidates to those wealthy enough to fund a campaign themselves.
- 2) Municipal elections would fall to the bottom of the ballot and have low priority for voters and media attention. Voters likely will not have the time to research municipal issues or candidates when so many other races are competing for their time and attention. This could lead to those voters not casting a vote for lower ballot candidates.
- 3) It is unlikely that combining the cycles would result in more votes being cast for many of the reasons stated in number two above and because the longer ballots could actually

result in voters failing to vote in the municipal election – effectively resulting in a lower voter turnout for municipal election issues.

- 4) Local political issues are not partisan by nature. Decisions about whether or when to invest in infrastructure, business or residential development, more efficient or effective governance, etc., do not generally follow regional or national political platforms.
- 5) The federal Hatch Act and Defense Department directives would prohibit active duty military and federal employees from running for partisan offices resulting in a much smaller candidate pool in many areas of the State. I myself am a navy veteran and, were I still active duty, would be unable to run for office if the elections were made partisan.
- 6) New evidence from the Secretary of State has refuted the theory that this move will save money for the State and County election budgets for a variety of reasons.

The impact of the above to Kansas residents is to narrow the pool of candidates for municipal offices due to increased costs and the Hatch Act, while having little or no effect on voter turnout.

Evidence does not support that there are any significant cost savings involved in combining these election cycles. Not only because of the information coming out of the Secretary of State's Office but because any municipal special election, which occur in the spring, will have to bear the full cost of the election thus becoming prohibitively expensive for many municipalities. Please take time to independently verify what you are being told about potential cost savings.

It is imperative that we maintain the non-partisan municipal elections separate from the higher profile partisan elections. If you have questions or would like to discuss this further, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today.

Sincerely,



Richard T. Boeshaar
Chairman of the Johnson and Wyandotte Counties
Council of Mayors
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