

Senate Ethics and Elections Committee
SB 171 Local Elections

Rod Stewart, Board Member, USD 108 Washington County Schools
President, Kansas Association of School Boards

Dear Committee Members,

I am concerned with **SB 171** and the impact on local school board elections. The information that I read stated that the general election would be in November and the new members would take office in January. The concerns that I have are as follows:

1. The new members would take office in the middle of the normal school year cycle.
2. Administrator evaluations and contract extensions are done in January. Several prior months of discussion have lead up to the decision on whether to extend contracts.
3. Several months of ongoing discussion on staff evaluations leading up to tenure decisions in the spring.
4. New members would start in the middle of the budget year instead of starting just prior to establishing the budget. They currently work through the process from the start and have a better understanding of how the budget works.
5. Currently new members have from April until July to begin to understand how a school board functions and to become acquainted with administration and staff. They also have the fall semester to evaluate administration and staff members for retention. If they take office in January, those decisions are made immediately.
6. City and School Board Elections in April allow for more focus on the non-partisan local government than if they are included in the long list of positions on the ballot of a November election.
7. Local elections are best suited as non-partisan. We need to elect individuals that are interested in helping kids and not be concerned about their party affiliation. The education of our children should never have a political agenda.
8. Military personnel are not allowed to be candidates in partisan elections. They can serve our country, but would not be able to serve our kids!
9. I have not heard of any local units of government that doesn't like the current system. Why try to fix a process that works just fine?
10. Anytime there is a school board election, there is the potential for either 3 or 4 new members. The year that I was elected to my local board, there were 4 new members elected. If we would have taken office in January, the 3 sitting members would have made the key decisions on staff and administration retention. I understand that we need to be efficient in spending tax dollars, but we also need to be sure that we don't disrupt the local governmental process.
11. If voter turnout is the real reason for moving the elections, try a different method to promote turnout. When school districts conduct an election to raise their LOB authority, they are required by law to use Mail Ballots. There were several LOB elections in January 2015 and the Mail Ballot return rate was very good.

Thank you for your consideration.