

Senate Committee on Ethics and Elections  
Hearing on House Bill 171  
February 11, 2015  
Statement by the City of Overland Park

Good afternoon Chairman Holmes and members of the Senate Committee on Ethics and Elections.

This testimony is submitted on behalf of the Mayor and twelve (12) elected city council members of Overland Park.

The City of Overland Park opposes SB 171, which would move local elections to the fall of odd numbered years.

Historically, municipal and local elections have been held in the spring. We believe that moving local elections to the fall would only frustrate and confuse voters, with candidates and issues vying for state and federal level office.

Furthermore, in local elections there are local ordinance changes or other governance questions on the ballot. It would be, in our opinion, a mistake to blend multiple local candidates to the mix, in addition to sometimes lengthy worded local ballot measures.

Another important factor to consider is that there appears to be no significant fiscal savings by moving all elections to the fall. If there was a demonstrated fiscal prudence, certainly a review of consolidating elections to a single season of the year would be merited, but we believe that not to be the case here.

Finally, the idea of making local elections partisan is not something that is not unfamiliar to us. We have governed under both partisan and non-partisan election systems and believe that the most effective and consistent approach is to keep local elections non-partisan primarily because governance at the local level is best accomplished when decisions are made in the interest of the community and not influenced solely by partisan political ideology.

This is not a situation where a “one-size fits all” solution works best. We respectfully request that you oppose SB 171 and maintain the current system of non-partisan, municipal elections held in the spring of odd numbered years.

Thank you.