



**Testimony in Opposition to Senate Bill 171 – Elections; municipalities and special districts;
spring to fall; other changes**

To: Honorable Chairman Senator Mitch Holmes
Members of the Senate Committee on Ethics and Elections

From: Nolan Sunderman, Assistant to the City Administrator

Date: February 9, 2015

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments in opposition regarding the proposed changes to local elections.

The City of Prairie Village has several concerns regarding Senate Bill 171. Due to the proposed legislation making local elections partisan, the legislation would eliminate citizens who are active-duty military or Federal government employees from continuing to serve their community on the City Council. Partisan elections will usher in a new political dynamic not customary for local elections. We believe by combining these elections, it will take the spotlight off local issues. Cities will now be competing with national politics making it difficult to bring these discussions back to local issues which impact citizens every day.

Although some may claim the proposed legislation will increase voter turnout, it will not help our efforts to educate citizens on local issues. Ballot fatigue is a significant concern when the ballots become lengthy.

Overall, if voter turnout is the concern, we would request researching mail-ballot elections and other potential alternatives. Mail-ballots could save taxpayers a significant amount of money and diminish the impact of weather on voter turnout. It is with this information we are opposed to Senate Bill 171.