



March 13, 2013

Testimony before the Senate Committee on Ethics, Elections and Local Government
SB 211 – An Act concerning elections relating to certain municipalities

By: Doug Glenn, Member of Board of Education, Topeka Public Schools, USD 501

Chairman Pyle and members of the Committee:

Thank you very much for the opportunity to testify today. I am speaking in opposition to SB 211. For the past 12 years it has been my honor to serve as a member of the Board of Education of Topeka Public Schools, USD 501. I consider service by elected school board members to be one of the most impactful and meaningful ways in which concerned citizens can positively shape their community, and by extension the State of Kansas, for generations to come. School board members voluntarily bring their unique abilities to the board and serve alongside their fellow patrons, school administrators, staff and teachers as a team to help make their local schools the best they can be. The ability to serve my local school district in an atmosphere of non-partisanship and with the ability to represent the east side of the district were two significant reasons for me to first run for a seat on the school board in 2001. The changes to the method of election of school board members as required by SB 211 would be detrimental to attracting citizens to school board service.

School board service, by nature, transcends commitment to a political party, and by requiring school board elections to be on a partisan basis, board candidates and members could be forced to choose between allegiance to a political party and what is best for the students of their district. Serving on a school board without remuneration and without regard to a political party is what helps make board service personally rewarding. School board members must be free to do their important work without being concerned about the pressure of a political platform or agenda and whether they have the blessings of a political party. They must be able to make their decisions based on what they feel is the best for the education of the students in their local community.

Additionally, the requirement that all school board members be elected on an at-large basis will be a significant detriment to the goal of equitable representation of district patrons regardless of what area of the school district they reside. The current election plan in place for Topeka Public Schools insures that two members are elected from each of the three geographical areas of the district, with one member elected on an at-large basis. This method helps insure that all areas of the district have a voice. The strength of our current system is that each area of the school district is represented and that all electors of the school district also have the opportunity to vote on all candidates in the general election. All board members therefore are held accountable to all patrons of the school district. It is not in the best interests of equitable representation to mandate at large school board elections. I believe that the requirements of SB 211 would be a significant detriment to the continuance of the high quality of service presently provided to their patrons by the dedicated school board members in the state of Kansas. Therefore, I respectfully ask that you vote no on SB 211.

Thank you very much for your consideration.