



KANSAS MAYORS ASSOCIATION
300 SW 8TH AVENUE
TOPEKA, KS 66603
P. (785) 354-9565
F. (785) 354-4186

To: Senate Ethics, Elections & Local Government

From: Terry Somers

Date: February 21, 2013

Re: Opposition to SB 211

Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony regarding SB 211. The Kansas Mayors Association is a group of nearly 350 mayors from all across Kansas and we are very concerned with the impact of this proposed legislation on all of the cities in the state.

Our association specifically discussed this legislation at our last meeting. After this discussion, there was a unanimous vote to actively oppose attempts to alter the timing and non-partisan nature of city elections.

By its very nature, city government is not partisan. Most of the elected city officials in Kansas serve their communities with little or no pay. We serve because we want to make our communities better places to live, work, and play. We do not serve partisan agendas. We simply serve our citizens in providing the services that affect their daily lives – filling potholes, maintaining clean water, public safety, etc.

Further, we also oppose moving city elections to the fall of even-numbered years. Local candidates and local issues would get lost in the frenzy of activity surrounding state and federal elections.

Proponents of this legislation often cite low voter turnout for spring elections as a reason for this change. But, lack of civic engagement is a pervasive issue that cannot be solved by moving all elections to the fall. While more individuals may choose to vote in the fall, they will certainly be less well-informed about local issues and that does not serve the public's interest at all.

For these reasons, the mayors of Kansas respectfully request that the Committee reject this legislation to alter our elections. We would be most happy to work with the Legislature to find ways to promote civic engagement and promote intergovernmental dialogue. Changing the election timing and making all 626 cities partisan would not accomplish that goal.