



# WYANDOTTE COUNTY ELECTION OFFICE

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## SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON ETHICS, ELECTIONS AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

### Testimony on Senate Bill 211

Monday, February 25, 2013

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in opposition to Senate Bill No. 211.

First, I believe consolidating elections is bad public policy. It is based on a multitude of false assumptions of what elections require of voters, election officials, and optical scan voting machines used to count paper ballots. Consolidating elections will be disastrous for local candidates and issues.

Second, consolidating elections will severely impair and overwhelm our ability to conduct elections. The current election methodology is not broken and does not need to be fixed. Kansas may have the best election laws in all of the United States. While there are some things which need to be tweaked, Kansas elections do not need to be drastically changed.

Consolidating elections will cause a host of unintended and undesirable consequences:

- Multi-page and complicated ballots; many will skip races/questions with which they are unfamiliar.
- The causes of low voter turnout are not magically fixed by simply moving local elections.
- Longer ballots double or triple programming and ballot printing costs.
- Ballot complexity will necessitate procurement of substantially more voting machines. There is no optical scan voting machine that will count a multi-page ballot as one ballot.
- Five-minute voter time limit in the voting booth; more time simply causes longer voter lines.
- Complexities create the need for more and better trained election workers.
- Recruiting and retaining election workers from a rapidly shrinking pool of volunteers.
- Two-year gap between elections works against recruiting, training and retention of workers.
- Stagnant election worker pay which is less than minimum wage. Statute sets the pay too low.
- Increased election worker training costs and significant increase to the time needed for training.
- Local candidates and issues will be unable to compete successfully to fund their campaigns.
- Local candidates and issues will lose their visibility to voters.
- Simultaneous candidate filings at both the state and local level create confusion.
- Increases the probability and necessity for special elections at greater cost to the taxpayer.
- Assumed savings of consolidating elections is illusory.
- Shifts costs to even years, but election complexity will actually increase costs.
- Increases the need for more polling places with fewer locations meeting ADA requirements or willing to participate; paying more for non-public locations which meet requirements.
- Insufficient time to obtain taxpayer information for creating drainage district poll books. Significant complexity of determining voter eligibility when voters are designated representatives.
- Different voter eligibility criteria forces Drainage District elections to be conducted simultaneously and separate from regular election.
- Feast or famine budgets with odd-year overly austere and even-year seriously underfunded.

I oppose Senate Bill No. 211. I am available to answer any questions in more detail.