

# CITY OF SHAWNEE

## CITY HALL

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## SENATE ETHICS, ELECTIONS AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE HEARING ON SB 211

### Opposition to SB 211 on behalf of the City of Shawnee

By Jim Neighbor, Councilmember Ward I

February 21, 2013

Honorable Chair and members of the Senate Ethics, Elections and Local Government Committee,

The City of Shawnee strongly opposes SB 211. This bill seeks to make local elections partisan and moves them in line with the federal and state election cycle. The City of Shawnee opposes this for the following reasons:

- Moving elections to the fall only crowds out local issues. The fall election cycle already has many issues and candidates that need to be covered by the media. Adding local elections to this only decreases the coverage of these races and the amount of information going out to the public on local races.
- Moving elections to the fall also limits voters' ability to thoroughly research candidates and issues based on the number of items that will be on their ballot if this bill should pass.
- Partisan elections only encourage further division by bringing Washington style politics to the local level. Cities operate in a very different environment than federal and even state issue politics. Making races partisan and in the fall only seeks to bring federal and state issues into the local arena where they do not belong.
- Finally, one of the most compelling reasons this bill should not be passed is its disregard for what residents have expressly supported by either voting for or supported by not protesting City Charter ordinances that utilize non-partisan elections on a local level. The City of Shawnee has had a history of non-partisan elections and continues to have in updates to charter ordinances which have not been protested. Additionally, residents in Johnson County have voted to include in their County Charter to hold elections on a non-partisan basis.

For these reasons, the City of Shawnee asks on behalf of our residents who have supported our City Charter to allow us to continue to operate our elections the way we have for years. That is, holding them in the spring and on a non-partisan basis.

Thank you for your consideration and for allowing us to submit these comments.

