



Testimony

Unified Government Public Relations
701 N. 7th Street, Room 620
Kansas City, Kansas 66101

Mike Taylor, Public Relations Director
913.573.5565 mtaylor@wycokck.org

Election Commissioner Budgets SB 299

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Senate Ethics, Elections and Local Government**

The Unified Government of Wyandotte County/Kansas City supports Senate Bill 299.

It returns the responsibility for setting budgets and taxing authority with the Board of County Commissioners, which is where it belongs. While the Secretary of State appoints the Election Commissioner in the four largest counties, those officials are county employees and their operations need to follow the same budget and personnel policies as all other county departments.

County commissioners are elected by the citizens to oversee county government operations, set the budgets for those operations and decide the tax rates needed to support those operations. The current situation stops these elected officials from being able to carry out those expected duties and responsibilities.

An appointed, unelected official should not be able to dictate spending and taxing decisions to elected county officials who have been given by voters the responsibility for making those decisions. The elected officials are held accountable for those policies. The unelected Elections Commissioner is not.

If you agree with the Secretary of State's position that an appointed, unelected official should be able to unilaterally set budgets and taxing amounts, then we may have found the path to resolve the on-going dispute over school finance. You could just give-up your financial duty to set State spending and let the appointed, unelected Supreme Court tell you how much to spend on schools.

The Legislature won't and shouldn't give-up the responsibility for setting State budgets and taxes. County Commissioners should not be forced to either.