

February 6, 2020

Chairman Sutton and members of the House Elections Committee,

Today I stand before you to begin a conversation about removing partisanship from our election oversight process. I appreciate the efforts Secretary Schwab has made to bring consistency to our elections across our counties. As a Johnson County resident, I appreciate the efforts being undertaken to find the most qualified applicant to serve as our county election commissioner. I believe that HB 2508 continues the spirit of these efforts.

As the chief election officer for the state of Kansas, the Secretary of State's office should be as far removed from party or personal influence as possible. While the party identity of a candidate for the legislature or governor may offer relevant information to how that candidate will serve, it is far less significant for candidates for Secretary of State where technical ability and experience play an increased role. Moreover, the qualified oversight of our elections is foundational to our democracy, and we should remove any temptation, by candidates or voters, to view the office of Secretary of State as a political stepping stone.

HB 2508 would make the Secretary of State's race nonpartisan and prevent a sitting Secretary of State from running for a partisan office without first resigning. If passed, this would help to depoliticize our election oversight, increase public confidence in the Secretary of State's office, and eliminate potential perception of conflicts of interest.

Rep. Brett Parker  
Ranking Minority