



House Elections Committee Rep. Schwab, Chair

H.B. 2271 – Moving municipal elections

*Presented by Diane Gjerstad
Wichita Public Schools
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Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

We rise in opposition to HB 2271 which would move School Board elections from the current spring election to join countless positions and issues on the November general election and would further make School Board elections partisan.

The current system of non-partisan elected leadership has served Kansas school districts well. School issues are best addressed in a non-partisan fashion to address a community's goals.

Currently Board Members take office in July which coincides with a new school year, new teacher contracts, new programs, and changes in programs for a new school year. Board members start the new school year along with students and staff.

Moving the election to November and taking office in January would put new Board members in the midst of contract negotiations with inadequate time to become acquainted with practices and concerns facing the district. Districts begin the negotiations process and the budget process in January. This bill would put new Board members in the difficult role of evaluating budgets with little time to become acquainted with the a district's priorities and business practices.

Working in tandem with the community and the League of Women Voters, we spent four years studying and refining our district election process. The result was community agreement to move to district elections approved by voters in November 1994. District elections ensure the Board has broad based geographical representation. Wichita school board districts have been reapportioned twice to comply with changes in population and growth. This past summer the Board redrew their boundaries to reflect target populations of 54,416.

Mr. Chairman, the current time and system for School Board elections serves our community quite well. It allows for Board members to begin their term as the new school year begins, to ensure geographical representation and is appropriately non-partisan.