

# LEGISLATIVE TESTIMONY



FROM BLUE VALLEY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT 229

## HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ELECTIONS WRITEN TESTIMONY ON HOUSE BILL 2271

Mr. Schwab and members of the House Committee on Elections, thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony regarding House Bill 2271 (HB 2271).

As you know, HB 2271 would make the following changes in the election laws for local school board members. First, it would move the election date for all local elections from the April of odd-numbered years to November of even-numbered years. Second, it would require elections to be on a partisan basis. Third, it would have a school board member take office in January, rather than July. Fourth, it would require all local school board elections to be at-large, removing the local option of candidates running by board member district. I want to go on record letting you know that the Blue Valley School District opposes HB 2271 and the changes it would require for local school board elections.

We oppose this bill for a number of reasons. One, we believe that combining local elections with general elections for federal, state and county offices will detract attention from school board candidates and issues. School board candidates will struggle to be heard. We believe a larger voter turnout with fewer informed voters on local issues is not an improvement over an election that is focused on local issues and candidates.

Two, we support the non-partisan system of electing board members that has been the practice in Kansas for decades. We oppose injecting partisanship into the governance of our schools.

Three, we like and support the current system in which the school board term coincides with the school year and fiscal year. New board members elected in April have several months of orientation before taking office in July, when the new fiscal year begins, and prepare for the start of a new school year in August. The current system also allows currently seated school board members to finish their terms after the district's graduations in May.

Four, ever since the current system of unified school districts was organized in the 1960's, the people of each district have been able to use various systems of board member districts to allow different communities or areas to be assured of representation on the board. Although these districts must comply with the "one person, one vote" equality of population, the current system helps ensure representation of different communities of interest. We do not believe the state should take away this option solely to move the date of elections.

For these four reasons, the Blue Valley School District Board of Education opposes HB 2271.

Tony Thill, Blue Valley USD 229 Board of Education President