



February 19, 2013

Senate Committee on Ethics, Elections and Local Government
Chairman - Senator Dennis Pyle

RE: SB211 municipalities: elections, partisan, fall, even numbered years----

Chairman Pyle,

My name is Maurice Harley, Mayor of Girard Kansas. I have served as the Mayor for eight years and I also served on the city council for ten years. Therefore I have participated in seven elections having won five and lost two.

That being stated I want to express my opposition to his House Bill in that as a local candidate for office, political party affiliation has never played a part in any of these elections referenced above. Girard is a second class city and therefore is in the majority of cities being under 5,000 in population. For the majority of smaller cities in Kansas the same is true in that local party affiliation is not a voting factor for the citizens. What is a factor is the local issues and how candidates will respond to those issues.

On the issue of voter turnout, I would like to share a personal experience. While being a candidate for Mayor, along with two other candidates, I was fortunate to win election by a narrow margin. I was asked an interesting question by the local newspaper "was I upset at not wining with 50% of the vote". I had received 49% of the vote and my official response was no I was not upset. Here I missed an opportunity to address the real problem. Voter turnout was only about 25%. What I should have been upset at was only one in four registered voters thought it important enough to vote.

Moving the elections to fall, in my opinion will not cure this concern. What will cure this concern is people changing minds and realizing that voting is an important process they should participate in. You can make all the arguments you want for and against moving the elections to the fall. That argument will never be answered to satisfaction of the majority (that being the 25% who vote). Our local election had a 25% voter turnout, which is voter apathy plain and simple.

Until voting is not a disruption to your playing computer games, watching TV, going to a sporting event or whatever else the citizen thinks is more important – we will have this debate. National and State elections energize party lines – Local elections are decided by voters who really care about their community – not the political party the candidate belongs to.

Therefore I urge this committee to oppose this HB2271.

Cordially,


Maurice A. Harley
Mayor of Girard Kansas

address: 120 N. Ozark • Girard, KS • 66743
phone: 620.724.8918
fax: 620.724.8060
web: girardkansas.gov