

Bill Turns Local Races Partisan

(KNZA)--A Kansas House committee is considering a bill that would make local city and school board elections partisan and hold them in conjunction with the November general elections of even numbered years.

The House Committee on Elections heard testimony Wednesday on the bill, with a long list of opponents testifying against the measure--including school board members and city officials.

A number of opponents said it would introduce divisive party politics into local issues.

However, Kansas Secretary of State Kris Kobach, who testified in support of the bill and whose office worked on the measure, said that wasn't the goal. Kobach said the bill would help address dismally low participation in local elections.

The bill would also eliminate geographical areas within school districts, with all school board members being elected at-large.

Hiawatha City Administrator Lynne Ladner voiced her concerns about the measure to city commissioners this week. Ladner said it would be a significant change to the way the city has elected its governing body for more than 150 years. She said the city would have to change the terms of office of elected officials, as it currently has three-year staggered terms with elections every year.

She urged local residents to express their opinion on the legislation to local lawmakers.

Many Signals Communication