

To: House Elections Committee
From: Nathan Eberline, Executive Director
Date: January 20, 2026
RE: Testimony in Opposition to HB 2452

I want to thank Chairman Proctor and the members of the Committee for providing an opportunity for the League of Kansas Municipalities to testify in opposition to HB 2452.

One of the primary reasons Kansas cities have historically conducted municipal elections in off-cycle years is to ensure that local issues receive focused attention. City elections routinely involve complex and technical matters—such as land use decisions, infrastructure investment, public-safety staffing, utility rates, and fiscal policy—that directly affect residents' daily lives. When municipal races appear on ballots dominated by federal and statewide contests, these issues are easily overshadowed. Off-cycle elections allow candidates and voters to engage more meaningfully in the substance of local governance, rather than competing for attention with national political narratives.

Additionally, off-cycle elections help preserve the nonpartisan and pragmatic nature of Kansas municipal government. Kansas cities have historically operated in a nonpartisan framework that emphasizes problem-solving over ideology. Consolidating municipal elections with state and federal races increases the risk that national partisan dynamics will spill into local contests, influencing outcomes based on broader political trends rather than community-specific considerations. Maintaining separation between local and national election cycles helps protect the collaborative, service-oriented nature of city governance that Kansans expect.

Kansas cities are diverse in size, geography, governance structure, and patterns of voter engagement. For that reason, current law appropriately allows cities to determine election timing in a manner that best fits their communities. A one-size-fits-all mandate removes local discretion and conflicts with Kansas's long-standing commitment to home rule. Cities are best positioned to assess when their residents are most engaged in municipal issues and how elections can be structured to promote accountability and informed participation.

Relatedly, separate municipal elections reduce ballot fatigue and protect meaningful voter choice. Even-numbered year ballots in Kansas are already lengthy, often including multiple federal offices, statewide races, judicial retention elections, legislative contests, and constitutional questions. Research and election experience consistently show that longer ballots increase voter fatigue and lead to roll-off in down-ballot races. When local offices

appear at the bottom of an already crowded ballot, they risk being decided by a smaller subset of voters who make it that far. Holding municipal elections separately results in shorter, more focused ballots that allow voters to give appropriate attention to local candidates and issues.

Across the United States, most states do not require municipal elections to be held only in even-numbered years. According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, only seven states currently mandate that municipal elections coincide with state or federal election cycles, leaving the vast majority of states to either require off-cycle elections or give localities the authority to choose their own dates.¹ It has been a deliberate choice to foster informed participation, maintain nonpartisan local governance, and ensure that municipal issues are not lost in the noise of state and federal politics.

With these concerns in mind, we share the Legislature's interest in increasing voter participation in local elections. This goal is important and widely shared. Our concern, however, is that HB 2452 risks increasing turnout without increasing engagement in municipal issues. Moving city elections to the even-year cycle inevitably ties local offices to national political narratives that have little connection to the day-to-day responsibilities of city government. The League remains interested in working with the Elections Committee on approaches that strengthen civic participation and public understanding of local governance, but we believe HB 2452 moves Kansas in the wrong direction. For these reasons, we respectfully oppose the bill.

¹ <https://www.ncsl.org/elections-and-campaigns/consolidating-election-dates>.