



KANSAS ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES

19 Colleges- One Voice

Opponent Testimony on HB 2452

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on behalf of the Kansas Association of Community Colleges in opposition to HB 2452. Kansas community colleges oppose this bill because placing local institutional elections on the same ballot as state and federal elections could make these elections more partisan than they are today and would reduce voters' ability to focus on issues that directly affect their local colleges, students, and communities with so many other issues potentially also on the ballot. Importantly, the current system of off-cycle local elections is functioning well, provides clear accountability, and has not demonstrated a need for statutory change.

Local elections are most effective when voters can give meaningful attention to individual races and candidates. For this reason, many local governing bodies, including community colleges, hold elections in off-cycle years. This structure allows voters to engage more deeply with local issues and candidates. Combining state, federal, and local races onto a single ballot would significantly limit the ability of community college trustee candidates to communicate with voters, participate in candidate forums, and gain visibility in an already crowded election environment. Off-cycle elections also allow local media to focus on community-specific issues such as workforce development, educational access, and affordability—core priorities for Kansas community colleges.

Historical experience indicates that when local contests are placed alongside high-profile state and federal races, voters are more likely to default to familiar names rather than evaluate candidates based on their positions on local education issues. This dynamic weakens local accountability and diminishes meaningful voter choice, despite the fact that the current election structure already supports informed voter participation.

In addition, HB 2452 would require certain trustees to serve extended terms of three years in order to accommodate the proposed election schedule changes. For many community college trustees—who serve in a part-time, unpaid, or minimally compensated capacity—this extension is untenable due to professional, personal, or family obligations. As a result, some trustees may choose to resign rather than serve longer-than-anticipated terms. These vacancies would then be filled by appointment rather than by election, undermining voter intent and replacing elected trustees with appointed board members. Consolidating elections would also create additional administrative challenges for county election officials. These challenges may include the need for multiple ballots, increased voter confusion, ballot fatigue, and higher rates of under-voting. Research consistently shows that voter participation declines as ballots lengthen, and adding local community college races to ballots already filled with state and national contests would exacerbate this problem. Additionally, county officials would have reduced capacity to support local candidates with filing requirements, campaign finance compliance, and election-related guidance. A question posed, which was unable to be answered was, "If this change is implemented would this mean that someone couldn't possibly serve as a community college trustee and a city commissioner or on the school board and the college board. Would this change limit the number of times a name could appear on the ballot and potentially limit someone's ability to serve in local offices? This question needs exploration because it could have significant ramifications in some situations.

Kansas community colleges strongly support civic participation and transparent, accessible local elections. However, when a system is working effectively and serving both voters and institutions well, change for the sake of change is unnecessary and potentially harmful. For these reasons, we respectfully request that the Committee not advance HB 2452.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony. Should you have any questions please contact Heather Morgan at 913-683-9946 or hmorgan@kacct.org.