



**Oral Opponent Testimony on
HB 2452, Changing the timing of municipality elections
House Committee on Elections**

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Chair Proctor and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in opposition to HB 2452. KASB's member-approved, permanent policies are clear: our members support "electing school board members in odd-numbered years" in "non-partisan school board elections." This position is rooted in a strong tradition of local control of Kansas public schools and an abiding belief in the role of public education as a cornerstone of democracy:

Kansas public education is governed by locally elected, non-partisan boards of education, citizens from varied backgrounds serving their districts and accountable to their district's voters for their actions. . . . KASB members believe that public education is best governed and managed by democratically elected school boards. We believe that our system is a cornerstone of American democracy.

Our members believe that this model best supports strong, responsive public schools.

Kansas is among the supermajority of states that hold city and school board in cycles separate from the general elections in even-numbered Novembers. Maintaining school board elections in odd-numbered years significantly benefits quality local governance of public schools, for several reasons:

- **Local issues receive the attention they deserve.** Local issues are vitally important to the day-to-day lives of our constituents. School board elections will be overshadowed by presidential, gubernatorial, congressional, and state legislative races if moved into the already saturated even-year November cycle.
- **Candidate costs will increase significantly.** Running a meaningful campaign in a crowded election environment requires more resources, and donor capacity is already strained during major election cycles.

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- **Volunteer time and engagement will diminish.** School board candidates would be forced to compete with higher-profile campaigns for volunteer support.
- **The current schedule preserves accessibility for voters and candidates.** Parents, educators, and community members—not just well-funded or politically connected individuals—can more readily run for local office in the current election schedule.
- **The current schedule preserves nonpartisanship in public school governance.** School board members must base their decisions on what is best for Kansas students, not on political party pressures. Moving the election cycle to align with partisan elections is, as we have seen in other states, the first step toward making these races partisan. And making these races partisan will exclude highly-qualified and effective candidates—those that are federal executive branch employees and members of the Armed Forces—from serving on school boards.¹
- **The current schedule encourages voters to evaluate candidates based on experience, qualifications, and their positions on the issues affecting their local public schools.** Non-partisan, odd-year elections promote decisions grounded in the merits of local school issues rather than reliance on partisan heuristics.
- **Research indicates that voters who participate in off-cycle elections tend to be better informed about school-specific issues and candidates.** Voter engagement in these races is intentional, not incidental to interest high-profile state or national races.

In 2015, the Legislature's move from April to November odd-year local elections struck a reasonable balance—giving voters a predictable annual November election while preserving the electoral space needed for high-quality local elections. This change has shown positive effects on voter engagement. For example, in one nearby county, voter turnout for local elections **doubled** from April 2011 to November 2015. If school board elections cannot align with the spring cycle—which better matches school districts' fiscal, operational, and academic calendars—then maintaining them in November of odd-numbered years remains the most effective, balanced approach for both informed voter engagement and accessible candidate participation. Let's continue the current system, which allows voters to support leaders who are not aiming to be politicians but simply to do good for their communities.

¹ Federal law prohibits federal executive branch employees from running for public office in partisan elections. An election becomes partisan if any candidate on the ballot lists party affiliation for that race. Rules applicable to members of the Armed Forces, including members on active duty and members of the National Guard even when in non-Federal status, are subject to similar restrictions.



Beyond these compelling policy considerations, HB 2452 contains significant technical problems as applied to school board elections. Under Kansas law, school board members **do not** take office in the odd-numbered year when they are elected; their terms commence on the second Monday in January in the following **even-numbered** year.² As a result, the timing and transition provisions in New Section 1(b) do not operate effectively for school board offices.

Additionally, courts across the country have consistently held that while legislators may prospectively change the terms of office for elected positions, they may **not** shorten the term of an individual who has already been sworn in and is serving. Because the bill's transition language is flawed, it could be interpreted to prematurely end the terms of school board members sworn in, for example, in January 2026. This legal vulnerability is itself a strong reason to reject this bill.

For these policy, practical, and legal reasons, KASB respectfully urges the Committee to oppose HB 2452.

Thank you for your consideration.

*KASB is a non-profit service organization built on an abiding belief in Kansas public schools.
We have put the needs of students and K-12 leaders first since 1917.*

² K.S.A. 25-2023. Neither this section of statute applicable to school districts, nor the corresponding provision applicable to city elections—K.S.A. 25-2120—are referenced anywhere in the bill.