

*Written Testimony in support of HB 2452
Provided by Rep. Courtney Sappington*

I would like to express my support of HB 2452 to move local elections (city and school board) to even-numbered years.

I live in Baldwin City and our city council and school board races typically draw about half the voter participation of even-year national elections. The past 3 local elections (odd years) typically see around 25% of registered voters, or around 1500-1800 voters. This is regardless of contested or uncontested races. The margins of some of the contested races have been as close as 100 votes, as was the mayoral race this fall. In 2021 and again in 2023, I assisted with friends' campaigns for school board. The biggest obstacle we faced was simply voter engagement, interest, and turnout.

I believe moving our local elections to coincide with bigger ballots will facilitate more competition on the ballot and better conversation around local issues. I see the lack of engagement in the number of elected positions that aren't even contested and I am hopeful that higher voter participation would drive more interest. We all recognize the importance of community input and the role of these local positions in our daily lives and anything we can do to better engage our citizens in their civic duties should be pursued.

Finally, I do not believe that adjusting the calendar for local government elections will introduce any more partisanship than already exists. I've seen plenty of local "nonpartisan" races that split communities down party lines, just as I've seen the opposite. I believe partisanship at this level is often a factor of candidates and climate and I've seen it ebb and flow, irrelevant of the lack of Ds and Rs on the ballot. We vote for nonpartisan judges' races in even-year elections without concern.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter.

-Rep. Courtney Sappington.