SS SB 1002 -- ELECTIONS SUBMITTED TO THE PEOPLE BY A SCHOOL BOARD

SPONSOR: Schnelting

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Children and Families by a vote of 10 to 5 with 1 member voting present. Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Rules-Legislative by a vote of 8 to 2.

This bill requires all elections for school board members of any school district in which a majority of the district is located in St. Charles County to be held at the November general election and makes all such terms four years. At the time of filing a declaration of candidacy, a candidate can optionally designate his or her party affiliation and consent to have such affiliation appear beside the candidate's name on the ballot (Sections 162.082, 162.301, 162.341, 162.459, and 162.481).

The bill further requires all proposals submitted to the voters of any school district in which a majority of the district is located in St. Charles County for the purpose of levying a new tax or renewing or increasing the levy of an existing tax, including for the issuance of bonded indebtedness, to be submitted at the November general election (Section 164.320).

This bill is similar to provisions in SB 839; SB 1185; and HB 1722 (2026); SB 485; and HB 539 (2025); and HB 2536 (2024).

PROPONENTS: Supporters say that our children deserve a school system where parents have more input. It’s not about partisanship, it is about participation. With the current timeframe, by the time boards get elected, they have no say over the school budgets. It’s currently only applying to St. Charles due to various compromises. Sometimes there is a need to create a model pilot program. We would be much better off if we had more turnout for these elections. School board transition periods have not been a concern historically. Candidates don’t have to show political affiliation, but this legislation gives them the option; some voters would prefer to be able to see which candidates match closer to their individual worldview. Moving the timing would allow more daylight hours for door knocking. It is difficult to get people excited during the winter months.

Testifying in person for the bill were Senator Schnelting; Kirk Wolf; Joshua Wilcutt; and Armorvine.

OPPONENTS: Those who oppose the bill say that this bill does not allow for elections of the entire seven-member school board. School boards need to understand the paramount importance of their diligence. That is much more important than political affiliations. Worrying about political parties will distract from what really matters. Moving the elections to November will put too much into too many focus areas. The bill does not solve a real problem. St. Charles' school board elections already have one of the highest turnouts in the State. Adding party labels shifts focus in a negative direction. Missouri students and families will pay the price. This legislation appears as an attack on St. Charles County school districts. Opponents point out that November ballots are already crowded. Critical projects being put on November ballots could delay said projects by months or even years. Lower voter turnout does not mean that these elections are any less valid.

Testifying in person against the bill were Amy Gryder; Missouri School Boards' Association; Kenneth Biermann; Missouri National Education Association; Darren Grunwaldt, Orchard Farm R-V School District; Julie Scott; Kenneth Biermann, Orchard Farm School District; Stephanie Mccarthy; and Arnie Dienoff.

Written testimony has been submitted for this bill. The full written testimony and witnesses testifying online can be found under Testimony on the bill page on the House website.