

RESOLUTION 01-2023

A RESOLUTION OPPOSING THE PASSAGE OF SENATE BILL 50 AND HOUSE BILL 50 RELATING TO PARTISAN LOCAL ELECTIONS.

WHEREAS, the Kentucky General Assembly has proposed bills in both the Kentucky Senate and the Kentucky House of Representatives to require partisan local elections for the offices of mayor and legislative body members; and

WHEREAS, it has been the collective experience of members of this body that the question of party affiliation is an infrequent question during a campaign, suggesting that the voters do not consider this issue a significant concern; and

WHEREAS, KRS 82.082 establishes the policy of Home Rule for cities in the Commonwealth recognizing the importance of local decision since local government can best establish the city policies and structures that work best to address local issues and problems; and

WHEREAS, in keeping with the policy of Home Rule, KRS 83A.045 currently allows local legislative bodies and boards to opt for partisan elections, giving those with the best insight into the will of their constituents the ability to make the change if it is desired by the voters; and

WHEREAS, there are currently 415 cities in the Commonwealth and only 6 of those cities have determined the need to conduct partisan elections for their local cities; and

WHEREAS, the passage of this bill and the change of 409 city elections to partisan elections will represent a departure from Home Rule governing and will cause a substantial increase in election costs and organizational efforts within jurisdictions throughout the state; and

WHEREAS, local government traditionally provides the services used by citizens on a daily basis including parks and recreation, emergency medical services, police and fire services, economic development, streets, sewers, water service, trash disposal, and other public works services which are generally local issues that do not follow party ideology; and

WHEREAS, these local issues and services, especially emergency services and utility services, could be at risk to increase conflict and delays if party divisions and polarization enter into local government; and

WHEREAS, cities have recognized an increased challenge in finding qualified people to serve in local elected positions and see the addition of a primary election, as

well as the potential for partisan acrimony, as a further hurdle in attracting good people to these positions; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Commissioners has been non-partisan and has and does work very well across the board fostering cooperation between elected officials belonging to different parties; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Commissioners ultimately sees no significant benefit to requiring partisan elections that would warrant the additional cost and challenges presented by the requirement.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Commissioners of the City of Owensboro, Kentucky, urges our state legislators to vote against House Bill 50 and Senate Bill 50, as well as any other future legislation that requires partisan elections on a local level.

INTRODUCED, PUBLICLY READ AND APPROVED ON ONE READING this 21st day of February, 2023.

Thomas H. Watson, Mayor

ATTEST:

Beth Davis, City Clerk