THE SPONSORS CLAIM:

The change will save municipalities money by sharing costs with a county or state general election.

The change will encourage higher voter turnout if held in conjunction with a county or state general election.

THE CITY OF DICKSON CONTENDS:

The costs of its last two stand-alone elections were $11,534 in 2017 and $9,199 in 2015. Dickson County Administrator of Elections Roxanne Hagewood estimates the city's cost if it holds its election in conjunction with a county or state general election will be approximately $6,000. That savings is less than 0.025 percent of the city's budget and is equivalent to less than 1/7 of the revenue generated by a penny of the city's property tax rate. Mrs. Hagewood also said the change would require additional training for poll workers and steps to prevent mistakes, which could drive up costs. She prefers the City of Dickson maintain its own election date.

The data from the five municipalities in Dickson County that did change their election dates to August or November of even years after 2009 does not reflect a significant pattern of increase in voter turnout. Instead, the voter data indicates that turnout is more directly impacted by the races on the ballot rather than the date of the election.

When he was a member of the Dickson City Council in 2010, current Dickson County Mayor Bob Rial advocated that all six municipalities conduct their elections on the same day in odd years, separate from the county, state and federal elections in even years. He opposed the City of Dickson moving its election to coincide with the county general election.

Because the county's voting districts do not align with municipal boundaries, combined elections force precincts to include ballots with and without municipal races. At least one precinct in Dickson County includes voters in two different Tennessee House of Representatives districts and residents inside and outside a municipality, meaning that precinct has to have four different ballots available.

All the voting places for the City of Dickson Municipal elections are not used in county-wide elections, leading to confusion on where ballots are to be cast.

It's hard enough getting the public to understand that the City of Dickson and Dickson County are separate entities. City Hall receives calls every day about services and issues in the county's jurisdiction. Imagine the confusion created if the races for Mayor of Dickson and Mayor of Dickson County are on the same ballot.

Respectfully submitted for your consideration.

Chris Norman
Administrative Assistant to the Mayor and City Administrator
City of Dickson, Tennessee
May 4, 2018