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STATE OF KANSAS

Testimony on HB2057 (Oral Opponent)

House Committee on Elections
Tuesday, January 31, 2023

Chairman Proctor and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on House Bill 2057. Our office is opposed to this legislation in its current form.

HB2057 would add an unfunded mandate to county election officials by regulating the number of, and standardizing operating hours for, ballot drop boxes. It is the position of the Secretary of State's office that such legislation would relinquish local control and redirect the resources from county election officials.

First, HB2057 limits the number of remote ballot drop boxes to one per 30,000 registered voters. This appears to be an arbitrary number. Only 10 Kansas counties exceed 30,000 registered voters, forcing nearly half of all counties to reduce the number of remote ballot drop boxes. This particularly affects rural counties, where the lack of resources over a large geographical area can be offset by the use of remote ballot drop boxes.

Second, HB2057 requires remote ballot drop boxes only to be unlocked when the county election office is open. This provision fails to take into account that the access and convenience that remote ballot drop boxes provide to voters whose employment, or other circumstances, may prohibit them from delivering their advance by mail ballot during normal business hours.

Kansas has employed a decentralized approach to administering elections. County election officials work within state election laws and with available resources to meet the needs of their voters. HB2057 negates this standard by countering the current method of conducting Kansas elections.

Our office looks forward to working with the legislature to ensure ballot drop boxes remain a secure method for voters to return their advance by mail ballot and provide county election officials with the support and resources necessary to continue administering safe and secure elections.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments to the Committee.

Respectfully submitted,

Clay Barker
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