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The Honorable Terrie W. Huntington, Chair
The Honorable Vicki Schmidt, Vice-Chair
Senate Ethics and Elections Committee

Re: Senate Bills 388 and 389 Elections Workers and Voter Education Programs

Good morning Chairperson Huntington and Members of the Senate Ethics and Elections Committee. My name is Maren Turner and I am the State Director for AARP Kansas. AARP Kansas represents more than 340,000 members in Kansas. Nationwide, AARP is the largest nonprofit, nonpartisan organization representing the interests of Americans age 50 and above and their families. Thank you for the opportunity to address our concerns with Senate Bills 388 and 389 through written testimony.

AARP policy holds that the right of all citizens to vote in free and fair elections is among the most basic of all civil rights and must be vigorously upheld. To wit, AARP opposes requirements that discourage or prevent citizens from voting.

Although AARP supports the specific objectives of Senate Bills 388 and 389 -- greater training opportunities for poll workers and improved voter education programs -- these bills raise several serious problems which cause AARP to conclude that their enactment as currently conceived is ill-advised. First, Senate Bills 388 and 389 are part of an impractical rush to implement voter identification (ID) a year earlier than originally planned in 2011 House bill 2067. Second, Senate Bills 388 and 389 are insufficient to ensure access to the voting booth for many voters without photo ID -- including a great many older voters, such as those with disabilities and poor access to transportation. Finally, statewide implementation of Senate Bills 388 and 389 in time for the August 2012 statewide primary will be costly and time consuming and likely much less effective than a more deliberate implementation timeline, as originally planned.

Of particular concern to AARP is the timeline for Senate Bill 389, which calls for implementation prior to the August primary. Launching a statewide campaign to contact all eligible voters is laudable, but the timeline is unrealistic. Furthermore, this bill takes for granted the passage of House Bill 2437, which accelerates implementation of 2011 House bill 2067.

Second, AARP is concerned that the short period of time between enactment of Senate Bill 389 – if it occurs – and the August 2012 primary is too little to assure that public education will reach all or most voters without photo ID and allow them time to take steps necessary to obtain a valid ID. The education campaign outlined in Senate Bill 389 relies on methods of communication, including the Internet, most available to affluent Kansans who least need to obtain photo ID, and least available to those who need it most: low-income persons, persons with disabilities, and other older voters who may live in settings without access to communications channels such as computers or newspapers – some do not even have access to TV or radio. Many voters Senate Bill 389 hopes to locate and inform are not reachable through these outlets.

In short, Senate Bill 389 does not get to the root of the problem for most voters who lack photo ID – accessibility. It is not enough to assume that well-trained poll workers and a voter education information campaign will prevent disenfranchisement. Many voters may know they need an ID to vote, but they may be unable to get to the nearest Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) location to obtain a valid ID, whether because they do not drive themselves, they have no one who can transport them to the DMV, or they do not live where there is access to public transportation. Even if these individuals find out about the need to get photo ID to be eligible to vote, and even if they are able to get to the DMV, they may be unable to provide the necessary documents to entitle them to be issued a valid photo ID.

AARP wishes to stress that availability of identification is a genuine problem. According to the Brennan Center, roughly 11% of voting-age Americans do not have government-issued photo ID and proof of citizenship. Photo ID laws affect older people, the poor, African Americans and students the hardest. The Center's acting director recently noted that, "there's no question that citizens over 65 will be particularly impacted. The older you get, the more likely you won't have an ID." Nearly one in five citizens over 65 — about 8 million — lack a current, government-issued photo ID, a 2006 Brennan Center study found. Most people prove their eligibility to vote with a

driver's license, but people over 65 often give up their license and don't replace it with the state-issued ID that some states offer non-driving residents. People over 65 also are more likely to lack birth certificates because they were born before recording births was standard procedure. Older women, in particular, are even less likely to have documentation under their married name.

With regard to access, AARP Kansas submits that Senate Bill 389 in its current form is woefully inadequate to do the job. AARP strongly recommends the amendment of Senate Bill 389 to require, and to authorize funding to support, the use of mobile units or other measures by the Secretary of State in order to ensure that access to valid photo ID is brought to all areas of the State. Without this additional feature, there is no assurance that many voters who lack photo ID can get the identification needed to exercise their fundamental, constitutional right to vote.

Finally, although the fiscal impact of these measures has yet to be estimated, we can be confident – based on the experiences of other states – that their implementation will be costly. According to the Brennan Center for Justice, Missouri estimated the cost of implementing its voter ID legislation at \$6 million in the first year of implementation. Indiana anticipated spending roughly \$2.2 million on similar provisions. Previous bills in Minnesota have estimated the cost of voter ID laws to be \$500 thousand per election, *before* outreach and education efforts.

In closing, we applaud the Committee for its work to improve electoral oversight, however Senate Bills 388 and 389 will have unintended, negative consequences if enacted as introduced. We respectfully request your opposition to Senate Bills 388 and 389 as presented and request your consideration of amendments to these bills as outlined in our testimony.

Thank you for your time and concern.

Maren Turner

