

STATE OF KANSAS
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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VIC MILLER
58TH DISTRICT

February 8, 2017

Chairman Esau, Vice-Chairman Carpenter and Members of the Committee:

I appear before you in support of HB 2158. If enacted the bill would modify the law so that mailed ballots received within four days after the election and postmarked on or before election day would be counted. As you know, current law requires all ballots to be received by the Election Officer on or before the close of polls on election day.

My motivation for requesting the bill's introduction stems from recent changes in the United States Postal Service.

In 2012, the USPS announced it was moving the processing of Topeka-area mail from North Topeka to Kansas City, Missouri. The USPS acknowledged that the move could cause delays in mail delivery, and indeed that has happened. To the extent those delays could impact the delivery of advance voting ballots, the law needs to be changed as provided by HB 2158.

Not only was Topeka mail service impacted, mail processing for the cities of Hayes, Salina, Dodge City and Hutchinson was moved to Wichita; mail processing for Liberal was moved to Abilene, Texas; and mail processing for Colby was moved to North Platte, Nebraska.

In Shawnee County alone, 94 ballots that were postmarked by November 8, 2016 were not counted for the general election. The change in law proposed by this bill will ensure that fewer voters are disenfranchised due to delay in mail delivery.

Seven other states already have laws in place providing for advanced ballots postmarked on or before election day to be counted after election day. Most of those states allow receipt up to the canvass date. I believe House Bill 2158 provides a balance between protecting voting rights while giving the county election office adequate time to process these ballots.