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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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KEITH ESAU  
14TH DISTRICT

February 7, 2018

Chairwoman Bowers and members of the Senate Committee on Ethics, Elections, and Local Government,

I wish to voice my concerns about the changes outlined in SB 299.

On the surface, SB 299 sounds reasonable. We should make sure that the personnel policies and office purchase policies follow certain guidelines. However, my major concern with these changes is whether the county commission should be given authority over basic election policies and procedures via control of the election budget.

In the operation of the elections offices across the state, there are certain base costs. These costs include:

- Office staff and salaries
- Office operation expenses
- Printing of ballots (set statutorily and/or through rules and regulations)
- Required mailings (set statutorily and/or through rules and regulations)

These costs have little variance and must be funded. Attempts to lower these costs through the budget would likely put the county in violation of the law. Letting the county create the budget for these items would also require the county to be knowledgeable in the operations of the elections office.

The elections offices also have certain variable costs that are included in the budget. These costs include:

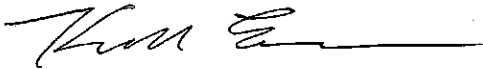
- The number of voting machines
- The number of polling places on election day
- The number of temporary election workers
- The number and type of informational mailings to assist voters

These are the costs that that counties could seek to reduce in the elections office budget. In every case, this creates a burden on the voters in the county, whether through longer drives to voting places, longer lines when going to vote, or increase difficulty in find their polling location or advanced ballot information.

When the county commissioners decrease the budget in other areas, say roads, the residents of the county are aware that is was the county commission that caused fewer roads to be built or the poor or delayed maintenance on their roads. However, if the elections office's budget is decreased, voters are likely to blame the Election Commissioner and the Secretary of State because of long lines, far-away voting locations, or insufficient notice of polling location changes.

In a day where we want to get the voters more information and making it easier to vote, I would urge that the budget for increasing the number of polling places, poll workers, and communications with voters remain under the control of the Election Commissioners who will be held accountable by the voters and the Secretary of State's office.

Thank you, Madam Chair and members of the committee. I would be happy to answer any questions you have.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Keith Esau', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Keith Esau  
House Elections Committee Chair  
State Representative, District 14