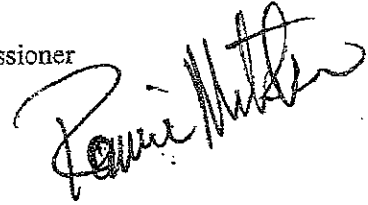


Senate Committee on Ethics, Elections and Local Government

Testimony on SB 299

Ronnie Metsker, Johnson County Election Commissioner

February 6, 2018



Madam Chair and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the honor and opportunity to speak to you today. I previously served in the Legislature where one of my committee assignments was House Election and Government Organization. I appreciate the value of relevant and succinct testimony. I am now serving in my third year as the Johnson County Election Commissioner. All 16 of our Johnson County Election Office full-time employees are viewed and treated as valued county employees.

The Johnson County Election Office fully embraces and follows K.S.A. 19-3419a, 19-3420 and 19-3424. I want to illustrate how the Johnson County Election Office intentionally works to foster a harmonious collaborative relationship with the Johnson County Government, the Board of County Commissioners and the County Manager's Office.

Upon my appointment as the Johnson County Election Commissioner, I sought to develop a strategic partnership between the Election Office and the rest of the County Government as well as the Board of County Commissioners. I have been placed on several key Johnson County Government teams, including the Executive Leadership Team, Central Services Team, County Management Team, and the County Manager's Cabinet. Each of us in Johnson County leadership understand and respect each other's role and responsibilities.

According to the statute, I formally present a certified budget to our Board of County Commissioners on or before July 15. I also keep members of the Board and County leadership apprised of our successes, challenges, and needs during the year – formal and informal, in group settings and as individuals. Hence, there are never surprises. My practice is just as other department heads – each engaging in robust and healthy conversation.

I consider the Johnson County Election Office budget effort an on-going, year-long, collegial and collaborative process. In my tenure, our County Election office has never been denied our budget request. Since we have a solid relationship and have been working on the process together all year long, votes approving the Election Office budget appear to be a formality. Such outcomes are by design.

Our interface within the County Government is not adversarial or contentious. Our Election Office team sees the County's systems and structures as our willing and helpful partner. We are diligent and intentional in adhering to all county policies and procedures. This is seen in the way we work together with Human Resources, Legal Services, Facilities, Budget and Financial Planning, Information Technology, Treasury and Financial Management, Public Works, Sheriff's Office, Library, Parks and Recreation, and Payroll. The Johnson County Election Office's practical partnership within our County is working marvelously well.

Prior to my appointment as the Johnson County Election Commissioner two years ago, the Board of County Commissioners initiated an internal Transition Audit. Our team chose to view the Audit process not as antagonistic, but as an opportunity to make our office better. Of the 24 recommendations in the Audit report, we have meticulously completed our efforts on 16 of the subjects. We are on schedule to complete the entire project by December, 2018. The process has nurtured a stronger bond between the Election Office and the Board of County Commissioners. In leading the Johnson County Election Office, I seek to do what is right, not only in the eyes of man but also in the eyes of God.

In conclusion, because of the successful, collaborative way in which our office functions within the structure of the Johnson County Government, I see no need for passage of SB 299.