



WYANDOTTE COUNTY ELECTION OFFICE

Bruce L. Newby, Election Commissioner
Frances D. Sheppard, Assistant Election Commissioner

HOUSE STANDING COMMITTEE ON ELECTIONS

Testimony on House Bill 2437

Wednesday, February 1, 2012

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill No. 2437.

The Secure and Fair Elections Act (SAFE Act) mandates that persons registering to vote will be required to provide proof of citizenship beginning January 1, 2013. This bill changes the effective date for proof of citizenship to June 15, 2012.

I testified before this committee almost one year ago in support of the SAFE Act. We were, and still are, prepared to implement the SAFE Act in its entirety at whatever date the legislature chooses. I can only speculate about what factors led to the decision to separate the implementation of voter photo ID from the proof of citizenship component. Most voters are already aware of the provisions of the SAFE Act. It has been a major point of confusion when we have to tell voters that part of the new law is not in place.

The proof of citizenship requirement applies exclusively to those citizens who are defined as new registrants. This group includes new citizens and those citizens who will be age 18. It includes persons who have moved to this state from another state or country. It does not affect any voter who is already registered in the state of Kansas.

We have established procedures to obtain from an applicant the information necessary for voter registration. Applicants who may have failed to submit a proof of citizenship document are no different, administratively, than those applicants who forget to write their date of birth or enter their driver's license number on their voter registration application. We promptly follow up with every applicant who may be missing essential information.

The new voter registration deadline, 21 days before an election, is very helpful to giving to voters and to county election offices, the time needed to obtain any missing proofs of citizenship.

This year is our best opportunity to reach the greatest number of voters. Please allow county election officers the opportunity we have this year to fully educate our voters. What we are able to do now, in my view, will affect the administration of elections for the next four years.

I support Senate Bill No. 2437 and stand for questions.

Bruce Newby
Election Commissioner