Sedgwick County Election Office ***



TABITHA M. LEHMAN, ELECTION COMMISSIONER

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February 21, 2019

Honorable Kansas State Sneator Elaine Bowers Chair, Senate Ethics, Elections and Local Government Committee and Distinguised Members fo the Committee

Re: Senate Bill 129

Chairman Bowers and Distinguised Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you in support of Senate Bill 129.

In Sedgwick County, we are seeing a repeated issue with voters voting at polling places other than their designated polling place on election day. This results in these voters casting a provisional ballot. In the last two Federal General elections we had between 1140-1700 provisional ballots cast due to incorrect polling location. In both of those elections, each active voter was sent a mailer that included a reminder to vote at their designed polling location on election day and information regarding the location of that polling location.

This is particularly concerning because when a voter casts a provisional ballot for being in the incorrect polling location the ballot they receive does not have the correct offices for their districts, resulting in only part of the ballot being counted. This is an administrative cost that could be reduced with this legislation but more importantly, we want to do what we can to provide the voter with the correct races on their entire ballot. We have had multiple close races in Sedgwick County and regularly have to draw a name out of a hat when there is a tied race.

We are aware that some counties do not currently have the technology to be able to provide this option and that is why we are requesting that this legislative authority be granted at the discretion of the county election official who can work with their county commission for budget authority to be able to provide this solution to their voters, if that is a good fit for their voters.

In Sedgwick County, we provide our voters with 16 early voting locations, and have for more than a decade. These early voting locations have successfully functioned in the same manner that we would operate county wide voter centers on election day. We have the technology and the expertise to securely implement these changes now, we are requesting the authority to do so.

Thank you for your time and I am happy to answer any questions.

Sincerely,

Tabitha Lehman
Sedgwick County Election Commissioner