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January 17, 2020

Honorable Kansas State Senator Elaine Bowers
Chair, Senate Ethics, Elections and Local Government Committee and Distinguished Members
of the Committee

Re: Senate Bill 260, Concerning Election Recounts for Municipal Offices

Chairman Bowers and Distinguished Committee Members,

As Harvey County Clerk and Election Officer, I thank you for your time in allowing me to testify
as an opponent of this bill.

I believe that this bill places an undue burden on taxpayers.

The changes to KSA 25-3107 proposed in this bill would require all taxpayers in the state to pay for a recount of a municipal office that represents a small portion of state. This bill would require the state to pay the expense for a recount that is requested by a municipal candidate defeated by a margin of .5% of the total votes cast, just like candidates for federal and state office races. In the 2019 election in Harvey County three races met the criteria for the defeated candidate to request a free recount: Halstead City Council (3 positions elected) – 1,111 total ballots cast with .27% difference between 3rd place and 4th place; Newton City Commission (3 positions elected) – 9,173 total ballots cast with .43% difference between 3rd place and 4th place; USD 373 Board (4 positions elected) – 15,696 total ballots cast with .45% difference between 4th place and 5th place. The total estimated cost to conduct recounts of these three races is about \$500 to recount using the same machines used originally or about \$1,125 to manually recount the ballots. Any candidate can request a recount regardless of the margin, but they pay the costs unless the results are changed. None of the candidates in Harvey County requested a recount in the 2019 General Election, but if a recount could be requested at no cost all three of the candidates defeated by less than .5% probably would have requested a manual recount.

I also believe it is unfair to add municipal offices to the list of races that qualify for state paid recounts, but county and township office candidates would still be required to bear the costs of a recount regardless of the margin of defeat.

I oppose SB 260 in its current form.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Rick Piepho".

Rick Piepho
Harvey County Clerk & Election Officer