

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ELECTIONS

TESTIMONY – HB 2333

FEBRUARY 18, 2021

Honorable Chairman and Committee:

Please accept my testimony in opposition to HB 2333. If passed, this bill would disenfranchise thousands of voters across the state of Kansas, hamstring our county election offices, turn hard-working, honest candidates into criminals, and deny some candidates their right to participate in the election process.

The changes on page 4, lines 23-26 would preclude our county election officials from doing the constituent work they routinely do today. In Shawnee County, for example, when an incomplete advance ballot application is received, an attempt is made to contact the applicant to correct/complete the application. The new language implies the election office must just disregard the application and deny the applicant any help in resolving the issue. It does not even provide for the opportunity to notify the applicant there is a problem, wasting hours of time and confusing voters. This disenfranchises thousands of voters unnecessarily. What would be the point of not helping the voter?

The added language on page 6, lines 13-16 (g) (1) and (2) is ridiculous. Candidates routinely visit with voters at their door, by phone, by email, or other means, to encourage them to vote. That is grassroots democracy in action! One way to encourage voters to participate in the franchise is to offer them the chance to vote at home by advance/mail-in ballot. In today's busy, COVID world, advance voting from home makes more and more sense.

I have helped hundreds of voters get an application for advance ballot. I have emailed the application to thousands of constituents and posted it online. Sometimes I even hand voters the application at their door with the "common" information (like the name of the county) already filled out. Sometimes I return that application to the election office for them at their request. What in the world is wrong with that? If other candidates are too lazy to get out and talk to voters, don't punish those of us who believe in helping folks vote by trying to turn us into criminals. It is this bill that is criminal.

I am not sure why Section 3 (B) is included on page 6 at all. Candidates are already denied the opportunity to serve as poll judges and clerks under K.S.A.25-2804 (b). Also, in 25-2804, an exception is made for candidates for precinct committeeman and committeewoman. There is no such exception in this new section, which would seem to preclude those particular candidates from participating in the work at polling stations. I would suggest that across the state, precinct people are quite valuable to county election offices doing poll work for them.

And does anyone seriously think that candidates are going to body block voters at the door?
Really?

This bill is a solution looking for a problem. In fact, it creates more problems than it solves.
Another way to disenfranchise Kansas voters. I hope the committee will reject HB 2333.

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