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February 7, 2023 - Kansas House Elections Committee hearing on HB 2086, relating to election procedures and processes – Proponent testimony

Chairman Proctor and Distinguished Committee Members,

My name is Rick Piepho, Harvey County Clerk and Chairman of the Elections Committee of the Kansas County Clerks and Elections Officials Association (KCCEO). The KCCEO is a statewide organization with 109 members including all county clerks and election commissioners in Kansas. Our duties are significant under statute and one of our most public facing functions is free and fair administration of elections. We take this duty very seriously. We prepare for every possible, and impossible, scenario which could occur.

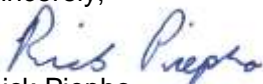
I am submitting this testimony on behalf of the KCCEO membership. The KCCEO prepared a legislative agenda which was developed through a policy committee process and agreed to by a majority of the members. This legislation aligns with multiple items on our agenda.

We support this bill that will cleanup multiple election statutes and timelines, enhance security, clarify roles of election officials, and increase transparency. Comments on selected areas of this bill:

- Various provisions in this bill will enhance the security of election processes and systems, election officers and poll workers, and ballot images and data.
- The extension of special election timelines including changes to bond law (KSA 10-120) are critical. Many special elections, including many petition-initiated elections, require utilizing this schedule which is nearly impossible to implement. We are required to send ballots 45 days prior to an election to all *Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act* (UOCAVA) voters with applications on file.
- The transparency of elections will increase with various provisions in this bill including the requirements to also provide copies of published election notices on election office websites.
- Publication and notification timelines currently do not align with UOCAVA and other election timelines.
- The prior residency requirement for election commissioner selection limits potential applicants, especially those with election administration experience.
- The inconsistency between the 100,000 population in KSA 19-3422 and the 130,000 figure in KSA 19-3419 should be corrected.
- Signature deficiency requirements for mail ballot elections are not consistent with the requirements for advance by mail ballots for other elections.
- Mailing costs can be decreased by reducing the number of elections with inactivity to remain on the permanent advance list.
- The timelines for recounts should be aligned with county canvass schedules.

The KCCEO supports HB 2086 as currently presented. We ask that the committee hear our concerns and act accordingly. I will gladly stand for questions at the appropriate time.

Sincerely,


Rick Piepho

Harvey County Clerk & Election Officer – KCCEO Elections Committee Chair