

Written Only Proponent Testimony on HB 2447
House Committee on Elections
Tuesday, January 27, 2026

Chairman Proctor and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to provide testimony in support of House Bill 2447. My name is Helen Van Etten, the former Republican National Committeewoman for Kansas. I strongly support establishing a permanent presidential preference primary, so Kansas voters have a meaningful opportunity to participate in selecting the next President of the United States.

Kansas turnout data makes clear that a presidential preference primary results in significantly greater voter participation than a caucus system. In 2016, when the Republican presidential nomination was highly contested, only 78,978 voters participated in the Kansas Republican caucus. By comparison, Kansas voters participating in a state-run presidential preference primary in 2024 totaled 95,487, even though the nomination contest that year had largely concluded. This comparison shows that the structure of the election, not the competitiveness of the race, is the key factor driving participation.

Additional historical data reinforces this conclusion. In 2012, just 29,857 voters participated in the Kansas Republican presidential caucus, while 254,106 voters cast ballots in the August Republican primaries for U.S. Congress, even though all four congressional races were uncontested. Kansas voters consistently turn out in much higher numbers when elections are conducted through a process they are used to and understand.

Caucus systems create unnecessary barriers for many voters. Participation is typically limited to a narrow time window on a single day, making it difficult for working Kansans, seniors, individuals with disabilities, and parents who must arrange childcare. In 2016, media reports from Johnson County described lines lasting more than an hour at caucus locations, further discouraging participation.

House Bill 2447 addresses these concerns by establishing a permanent, state-administered presidential preference primary. This approach allows voters to participate during regular polling hours or through advance voting. As a result, participation is expanded and the outcome more accurately reflects the will of Kansas voters.

HB 2447 strengthens voter participation in Kansas and ensures voters have a greater voice in the presidential nomination process. Thank you for your time and consideration of this proposal.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Helen Van Etten
Former National Committeewoman
Kansas Republican Party