SCOTT SCHWAB
Secretary of State

Docking State Office Building
915 SW Harrison Street
Topeka, KS 66612
(785) 296-4564
sos.ks.gov

STATE OF KANSAS

January 26, 2026

Testimony on HB 2447 (Oral Neutral)
House Committee on Elections
Tuesday, January 27, 2026

Chairman Proctor and members of the Committee:

The Secretary of State is neutral on HB 2447, which would permanently schedule the Presidential Preference Primary (PPP) on the first Tuesday in March in years when a presidential election is held. This is a policy decision best left to the Legislature.

Any concerns the Secretary previously raised regarding the implementation details of the 2024 PPP legislation have been addressed in this bill.

The Secretary offers one suggested addition for the Committee's consideration.

In 1992, Kansas conducted a Presidential Preference Primary. Despite the language of KSA 25-4508, the Legislature declined to appropriate funds to reimburse counties for their direct costs. The Attorney General subsequently concluded that no legal action could be taken to compel such an appropriation despite the statutory provision. See AG Opinions 92-25 and 99-57.

Counties have long memories of that experience and request that KSA 25-4508 be amended to mandate an appropriation reimbursing them for the direct costs of conducting a PPP. Direct and indirect costs are defined in existing regulations (KAR 6-1-1 and 6-1-2). Unlike other elections, a PPP does not result in the election of any official who represents a county, which has historically justified state reimbursement.

For the Committee's benefit, I would also like to offer some personal observations based on my experience with party-run presidential primaries. I served as Executive Director of the Kansas Republican Party from 2011 through 2017 and planned and supervised the party's 2012 and 2016 contests. I am happy to answer questions regarding the unique features of a PPP, including how political parties use vote totals to allocate national convention delegates.

Both national parties control the timing and structure of state procedures used to gather voter input for delegate allocation. Traditionally, four states— Iowa, Nevada, South Carolina, and New Hampshire—are permitted to conduct their contests earlier. For all other states, the earliest permissible date is the first Tuesday in March, commonly known as "Super Tuesday."

Kansas Republican Party–Run Primaries (Caucuses)

2012 GOP Party-Primary / Caucus: Each county conducted its own election using volunteers and generally managed voter flow successfully.

SCOTT SCHWAB
Secretary of State

STATE OF KANSAS

Docking State Office Building
915 SW Harrison Street
Topeka, KS 66612
(785) 296-4564
sos.ks.gov

Total turnout: 25,700 voters

- Santorum: 15,290
- Romney: 6,250
- Gingrich: 4,298
- Paul: 3,767

2016 GOP Party Primary / Caucus: Each county again conducted its own election using volunteers. Approximately 90 counties managed voter flow successfully, 10 counties experienced significant stress handling the voter flow; five counties were overwhelmed by long lines.

Total turnout: 72,000 voters

- Cruz: 35,207
- Trump: 16,062
- Rubio: 12,189
- Kasich: 7,795
- Carson: 511
- Bush: 78
- Fiorina: 32

By comparison, the 2024 state-run PPP resulted in approximately 95,500 Republican ballots cast. (There was no PPP conducted in 2020.)

Conclusion: Political parties can successfully conduct low-turnout contests, which typically occur when an incumbent president is seeking re-election. However, high-turnout elections—such as those expected when there is no incumbent, for example in 2028—can overwhelm party resources. HB 2447 preserves flexibility by allowing political parties to opt out of conducting a PPP.

Currently, 43 states use state-run primaries to support the parties' delegate-selection processes; three states rely solely on party-run procedures; and four states use a hybrid approach.

Sincerely,

Clayton Barker

Clayton L. Barker
Deputy Secretary of State,
General Counsel Office of the Kansas Secretary of State
Clay.Barker2@ks.gov