

LOUD LIGHT CIVIC ACTION

Melissa Stiehler
Loud Light Civic Action
Oral Opponent Testimony of HB 2493
For the House Elections Committee

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Chair Proctor, Members of the Committee,

Thank you so much for the opportunity to provide testimony today. My name is Melissa Stiehler, and I serve as Advocacy Director of Loud Light Civic Action, a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that supports and builds the civic engagement and leadership of young people in Kansas. We represent over 16,000 Kansans, including supporters in every House and Senate district across the state. Loud Light Civic Action's primary goal above all else is to ensure all Kansans can exercise their right to vote in a free and fair election. It is with these values that Loud Light Civic Action opposes HB 2493.

Voters have a right to be given assistance by a person of the voter's choice

Restrictions on who may assist a voter with transmitting their ballot may be in violation of federal law regarding disability rights and language access. While there may be a state interest in creating enforcement mechanisms for existing law, that interest does not supersede the freedom for all eligible voters to cast their ballots freely, safely, and equally.

Restricting assistance to only those who have a driver's license or nondriver's identification card:

25-2437. (a)(2) – Adds “the identification number of such person's driver's license or nondriver's identification card;”

Restricting assistance to only those who are 18+, U.S. citizens, resident in the voting area: 25-2437.

(a)(1) – Adds “qualified elector” to attestation as a requirement to assist ballot return, KS Con Art 5 Sec 1 “Every citizen of the United States who has attained the age of eighteen years and who resides in the voting area in which he or she seeks to vote shall be deemed a qualified elector”

Can a voter ask their friend who doesn't have a Kansas Driver's License to walk their ballot to the mailbox? If a paraplegic voter's assigned care worker is a permanent resident but not a U.S. Citizen, how does that work? What about their 16 year old child? Can a voter only choose someone to assist them who has the same ballot type because an individual is only a qualified elector for the districts they reside in?

How does this impact voters?

How is the VOTER impacted if these fields are blank? If their ballot is rejected for a blank assistance license number field, what is the due process procedure for allowing that voter to cure the issue and ensure their ballot is counted? Is that procedure an undue burden on the voter to the extent that the barrier would be too high for them to overcome, essentially causing the voter to be disenfranchised?

How does this impact personal security and data privacy protections?

Having your personal private information listed on the outside of the ballot could be a security concern for voter assistants. This may cause a chilling effect on the willingness of people, even if they meet the requirements as outlined in this bill, to engage in assisting voters for fear of their ID number being exposed through the ballot delivery process, whether that be through mail drop off or in person delivery.

Conclusion: Loud Light Civic Action opposes HB 2493 at this time and encourages the committee to engage in the due diligence to ensure that any changes proposed to our electoral laws have been fully vetted with evidence based conclusions for any recommendations. If the legislative body engages fully in the vetting process while bills are in committee, then hopefully clean up bills such as HB 2493 won't be needed as frequently in the future. Thank you all for your time and I hope you take my testimony into consideration.