

LOUD LIGHT CIVIC ACTION

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Loud Light Civic Action
Written Opponent Testimony of HB 2503
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 2503.

Concern- Legislative Pre-emption is a Violation of Home Rule, Local Control of Election Administration

It appears as though, despite the name of this bill, it is only creating a ban on mail-only special local elections. Regardless of the frequency or size of these elections, the local election officials and the community of voters impacted should have home rule in these circumstances and it is not for the entire legislative body to make these decisions for what is best local governments and most accessible to its citizens.

Concern- Practical Impact for Election Administrators Related to Special Districts

- Overall - How often are these elections used now and what is the expense of requiring them to move to poll sites?
- Pg 16 Ln 31-33 - logistical impact on municipalities of not being able to Annex 40 acres without waiting to put it on regular Election Day (e.g. if we go to even-year only, cities may have to wait 2 years to do their business)
- Pg 18 Ln 22-23 – Odd way to reference statute “by section 14 of chapter 120 of the 2003 Session Laws of Kansas”
- Pg 34 Ln 18-27 – Irrigation (property owners are qualified electors for these) districts would have to have in-person poll sites? If this aligns with a regular election won't that make issues for irrigation-eligible-only voters?

Conclusion: Loud Light Civic Action opposes HB 2503 and encourages the legislature to use its time and resources to empower local election officials to administer elections in whatever means is most safe and accessible to the voters. Passing what could be yet another unfunded mandate on county officials could create enormous complications and costs- further decreasing access to the ballot and increasing property taxes.