

To: House Elections Committee
From: Nathan Eberline, Executive Director
Date: February 3, 2026
RE: Opponent Testimony on HB 2503 – Written Only

I would like to thank Chairman Proctor and members of the Committee for providing an opportunity to offer opponent testimony on HB 2503 on behalf of the League of Kansas Municipalities.

The League supports the authority of local jurisdictions to conduct certain elections by mail when expressly authorized by statute. Following last year's legislation restricting the timing of special elections, many local issues are now pushed further down the ballot, increasing the risk that they are overlooked due to voter drop-off. While the Mail Ballot Election Act does not permit all local elections to be conducted by mail, it provides a narrowly tailored option for specific matters such as consolidation, annexation, and other statutorily authorized questions. Given the limited scope of this authority, local governments should be permitted to continue using mail ballot elections where allowed and where doing so serves the best interests of local residents.

When cities have conducted elections pursuant to the Mail Ballot Election Act, they have consistently reported strong turnout and meaningful engagement on the questions presented. Restricting the use of mail elections could create practical challenges for cities when a timely election is required. Cities are often required by statute or project timelines to hold elections for issues such as bond authorizations, annexations, or other time-sensitive decisions tied to financing, development, or infrastructure schedules. With Kansas limiting election dates to March, August, and November, removing mail elections further reduces local flexibility and can force cities to delay critical projects, increasing costs, missing construction windows, or jeopardizing financing arrangements. In some cases, the inability to call a timely election could stall economic development or infrastructure improvements altogether.

Finally, it has been suggested that repealing the Mail Ballot Election Act would yield fiscal savings by avoiding the cost of conducting mail ballot elections. In practice, those costs are more likely to be shifted rather than eliminated. Local questions would instead be placed on special, primary, or general election ballots, resulting in longer ballots, additional ballot pages, increased staffing

needs, and longer average voting times at polling locations—all of which can increase administrative complexity and election costs for local governments.

While the League supports efforts to increase voter participation and recognizes the importance of managing election costs, HB 2503 is likely to work against both goals. Mail ballot elections are rare and typically used only when they serve the best interests of local communities. For these reasons, we respectfully urge that local authorities retain the option to conduct mail ballot elections and oppose HB 2503.