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February 3, 2026 - Kansas House Elections Committee hearing on HB 2503, repealing the mail ballot election act – Opponent testimony

Chairman Proctor and Distinguished Committee Members,

My name is Rick Piepho, Harvey County Clerk and Chairman of the Elections Committee of the Kansas County Clerks and Election Officials Association (KCCEOA). The KCCEOA is a statewide organization with 109 members, including all county clerks and election commissioners in Kansas. Our members are responsible for administering voter registration and elections at the local level and are committed to ensuring elections that are free, fair, secure, and efficiently administered.

I am submitting this **opposition testimony** on behalf of the KCCEOA membership regarding **HB 2503**. The KCCEOA prepared a legislative agenda which was developed through a policy committee process and agreed to by a majority of the members. One of the items specifically included in that agenda is: “Maintain the status quo with regard to election, registration and canvass schedules...” Accordingly, since a clear administrative benefit is not demonstrated, we oppose this bill. The intent of this testimony is to provide information from an election administration perspective and to outline general administrative and voter-facing considerations related to the bill as introduced.

HB 2503 would repeal the mail ballot election act and remove statutory authority for conducting elections by mail ballot across numerous areas of Kansas law. While the bill is largely presented as technical in nature, its practical effect is to eliminate a long-standing election option that has been used by counties, cities, school districts, and other local units of government for limited-purpose, low-turnout elections.

KCCEOA anticipates significant administrative, operational, and cost impacts from eliminating mail ballot elections. From an election administration perspective, we do not believe this legislation improves election security or efficiency, and it removes a tool that has proven useful for limited types of elections. Some of the factors to consider are:

- Elections conducted under the mail ballot election act (KSA 25-431 *et seq.*) are only used for narrowly focused questions such as bond issues, special district matters, or other single-purpose elections. These elections often involve relatively small electorates and limited ballot content, making them well-suited to a mail ballot format.
- Requiring all such elections to be conducted as traditional polling-place elections would substantially increase administrative workload, staffing needs, and logistical complexity for county election offices.
  - Additional polling locations, voting equipment, poll workers, training, and supplies would be required.
  - Many of these elections are currently conducted at a lower cost than a full in-person election. Any increased costs would ultimately be borne by local governments and taxpayers.
- Voter turnout is often higher for special question elections conducted by all-mail ballot, commonly in the range of 50–60%, compared to approximately 20–30% for traditional polling-place elections.
- Mail ballot elections provide an accessible and convenient voting method for voters, particularly in rural areas, small districts, or elections with limited public interest where operating full polling places is difficult to justify.
- Kansas has decades of experience administering mail ballot elections with established statutory safeguards, requirements, and procedures. Removing the statutory framework does not enhance security; it simply eliminates a controlled and familiar process.

- The bill affects a wide range of statutes beyond the election code, increasing the likelihood of unintended consequences, implementation challenges, and future statutory clean-up.

The KCCEOA does not currently take a position that mail ballot elections should be expanded, although some members support expanding their use. We strongly support retaining mail ballot elections as an option where current law already authorizes their use. Local election officials and governing bodies are in the best position to determine when a mail ballot election is appropriate for a specific circumstance.

For these reasons, the KCCEOA opposes House Bill 2503 as currently presented. We ask that the committee consider the administrative impacts and preserve mail ballot elections as a lawful option in Kansas. I will gladly stand for questions at the appropriate time.

Thank you for your consideration,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Rick Piepho". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Rick Piepho, Harvey County Clerk & Election Officer – KCCEOA Elections Committee Chair