

MINUTES OF THE HOUSE ELECTIONS COMMITTEE

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Mark Kahrs at 1:30pm on Wednesday, January 27, 2016, 281-N of the Capitol.

All members were present

Committee staff present:

Ruth Mahner, Kansas Legislative Committee Assistant
Daniel Yoza, Office of Revisor of Statutes
Mike Heim, Office of Revisor of Statutes
Cindy Lash, Legislative Research Department
Martha Dorsey, Legislative Research Department

Conferees appearing before the Committee:

Bryan Caskey, Secretary of State's Office;
Beverly Gossage, HSA Benefits Consulting;

Others in attendance:

[See Attached List](#)

Meeting call to order

Chairman Kahrs called the meeting to order at 1:30 pm.

Possible bill introductions

There were no bills to introduce.

Hearing on: HB2507 — Elections; ballots; city of candidate residence removed.

Chairman Kahrs asked Daniel Yoza, Office of Revisors, to review the bill. This is a very straightforward bill; it simply removes the requirement that a city of a candidate be placed on the ballot. In response to questions, he explained that this does not allow for the option of including the city of residence; ballot format will be uniform and directed by the Secretary of State.

Proponents:

Bryan Caskey testified that the Secretary of State's Office supports the bill for several reasons. First, it makes the ballot shorter; while this may not equate to a decrease in costs, it is always an issue for election officials to keep the ballot as short as possible. Second, it increases white space on the ballot which makes it easier for the voter to understand, view, and cast. Third, when there is no residency requirement for a particular office, including that information can be misleading. ([Attachment 1](#))

In answer to a question whether this is an ongoing problem, he stated that although there is no concrete data available, he can give anecdotal evidence that this is a frequent source of complaints and

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confusion. He acknowledged that a candidate's city of residence might be an important piece of information for the voters to have but said he felt that it was better addressed as part of the campaign.

Beverly Gossage testified as an individual who works in political campaigns. She does not consider place of residence as a deciding factor in a candidate's fitness for office. On the ballot, the place of residence mainly serves as a way for a low-information voter to select one candidate over another. It can also be a disadvantage to residents of small towns, who will not get automatic votes simply on the basis of their place of residence. ([Attachment 2](#))

In answer to questions, Ms. Gossage agreed that there might be times when a voter would want to be represented by a person who lived in a specific area; but she asserted that such information is readily available. And if a voter considers it important, leaving it off the ballot might encourage an interested voter to seek out the information, which creates a more-informed voter.

The revisors and researchers were asked to provide three additional items of information: how long city of residence has been included on Kansas ballots; how many other states omit residence information; and the number of county attorneys serving in more than one jurisdiction. This data will be available at a future date.

An additional proponent, Mike Pirner, was unable to testify in person as intended. He will submit written testimony which will be presented to the committee and added to the hearing at that time.

Chairman Kahrs directed attention to a proposed amendment that had been distributed. ([Attachment 3](#)) The amendment is unrelated to the bill itself but in the same geographical region of the statute and is basically intended to remove some antiquated language and clean up the text. It doesn't require any testimony and will be addressed at the time that the bill is worked.

There were no written or oral opponents, and no neutral testimony.

In answer to a follow-up question regarding multiple jurisdictions, Bryan Caskey stated that the only situation of which he is aware that an official may hold office in more than one county, is the position of county attorney. A county attorney may run and be separately elected in more than one county. This is not applicable to any judicial position. The prohibition against holding more than one office is a state prohibition and not applicable in county races.

Representative Alcala reiterated the earlier question as to whether there is any concrete data about the number of calls received by the Secretary of State's Office indicating confusion on this issue, and Bryan Caskey replied that his evidence is anecdotal but based on personal experience. Representative Alcala asked to have it noted in the record that there is no proof in his opinion of any voter confusion, other than the testimony of Mr. Caskey..

As there were no other questions or comments, Chairman Kahrs closed the hearing.

Unless specifically noted, the individual remarks recorded herein have not been transcribed verbatim. Individual remarks as reported herein have not been submitted to the individuals appearing before the committee for editing or corrections.

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Announcements

There were no additional announcements.

Adjournment

Chairman Kahrs adjourned the meeting at 2:15 pm.

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