

Written Testimony of State Representative Carmichael

In Opposition to HB 2108

House Elections Committee

January 28, 2015

Chairman Kahrs, and Members of the Committee:

I ask the committee consider this written testimony as part of the hearing on HB 2108 dealing with "Straight Ticket" voting.

Although I have been involved with Kansas elections for over twenty years, I will not be addressing my personal experience with Kansas elections in my testimony today; instead, I want to share with the committee historical information from the State of Oklahoma.

For many years, from perhaps the 1920's through the 1970's, my grandparents (on both sides of the family) served as election workers, partisan political party officers, and candidates in Oklahoma elections. As a little boy, I recall seeing a half-pint bottle of whiskey on a high shelf in my Aunt Eleanor's home bearing as best I recall a blue donkey (or maybe it was a rooster) on the label. I inquired of Aunt Eleanor, a God-Fearing and tee-totaling woman, why she allowed that bottle in her home.

It was explained to me that in the past bottles like this were handed out, even when Oklahoma was a "dry" state, on Election Day. Since Oklahoma had "Straight Ticket" voting at the time, bottles like this were used to encourage voter turnout. Because many voters were then illiterate, the animal on the bottle corresponded to the animal on the ballot, and let folks cast a mindless vote for democratic candidates. I don't know if the republicans did the same thing, but given the lack of republican voters in Eastern Oklahoma at the time, I doubt it would have been worth the effort.

I am attaching for the committee's consideration a relic from the past, a Kansas "Straight Ticket" ballot located by the State Library.

I urge the committee to refrain from returning Kansas to the "bad old days" of mindless straight ticket voting. No matter how much it might speed up the process on Election Day, I believe voters should

think before they vote. We hear much about voters needing to be informed on the issues and candidates before they go to the polls. Straight ticket voting requires neither. Instead, it encourages uninformed members of the electorate to simply mark one box and leave. Surely the franchise to vote, which so many Kansans have defended, even with their lives, requires more from voters on Election Day than just looking for a Donkey or an Elephant on their ballot.

Thank you for your consideration of my testimony.

John Carmichael
State Representative
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