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**House Committee on Elections**  
**Testimony on SB 171**  
**Jamie Shew, Douglas County Clerk**  
**President, Kansas County Clerks and Election Officials Association**

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on Senate Substitute for SB 171 on behalf of the Kansas County Clerks and Election Officials Association (KCCEOA). My name is Jamie Shew. I am the President of KCCEOA and conferring today on behalf of the organization. Our organization has given this issue careful consideration weighing the original SB 171, against the substitute bill and now we have considered the House Chairman's proposal. At every step in the process we have polled our membership to determine the best path forward for competent election administration and increased turnout.

We recognize the concerns regarding low turnout for city and school elections. The odd-year schedule, which passed the Senate, removes many of the obstacles presented in odd-year consolidation, addresses concerns about timing, and provides potential for increasing turnout with annual August/November election. To be clear, from an elections administration and increased turnout standpoint, the members of our association support Senate Substitute for SB 171 as it is currently written.

Any attempt to consolidate Fall and Spring elections into a single even-year election is opposed by our organization. Such a consolidation increases ballot styles, produces multi-page ballots, and creates complexity, especially in August even-year elections. I will attempt to express our concern with this consolidation through the remainder of our testimony.

The August even-year primary, especially with non-partisan local offices, triples the amount of ballots in each polling place and drives up costs for conducting our most expensive election. As presented to the interim committee, in the 2014 Primary Douglas County had 207 ballot styles (103 ballot styles x two parties + 1 city question ballot). The estimated number of ballot styles our county would have with a combined even-year election with non-partisan races would be 411 ballot styles. With the additional costs of this amount of ballot styles, we would increase the number of poll workers to avoid giving out incorrect ballots. One precinct in our county (South Eudora) would have 21 different ballots at the polling site with an even-year consolidated election.

Additionally, at the request of the Interim Committee, many of our members completed spreadsheets which factually determined the cost per voter for each election. For every county, the August Primary Election was our most costly to operate per voter; even more expensive

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than current Spring elections. The following costs per voter for Douglas County illustrate what other counties experience: 2013 General (\$4.54/voter), 2014 Primary (\$5.26/voter), and 2014 General (\$2.68/voter). When calculating costs for elections the large cost drivers are programming, ballot styles and the length of the ballot. In some counties electronic machines are used as the primary method of voting and even in those counties costs per voter were higher in the even-year Fall primary. By adopting the proposed amendment you are significantly increasing the cost of what is already the highest cost election in the biennial election cycle.

The possibility of multi-page ballots for the November elections is of great concern. With city council, school board, statewide officers, legislative, constitutional questions, judge retention and special questions the ballots in a consolidated even-year election ballots will, without question, become multi-page ballots. There are only so many words that can be fit on a page of paper while still maintaining a useable format. Despite the tools provided in Senate Substitute for SB 171 a consolidated approach to all elections to the Fall of even numbered years leaves counties in the position of administering multi-page ballot elections.

Our organization recognizes this bill was the initial starting point for an important conversation about elections in Kansas. Research exhibits there are many avenues to increase turnout beyond combining elections. Expert testimony during the interim committee found mail ballot elections were the most successful in increasing turn-out in local elections; our organization strongly supports exploring expanded mail ballot elections in Kansas. Because of the forward thinking of the Kansas Legislature and its willingness to try new ideas in elections we have already seen increased turnout for some elections. The legislature mandated mail ballot elections for recent LOB questions. Turnout numbers were much larger than would have occurred under the traditional polling place model. In Douglas County, we had a 33% turnout for the 2015 LOB mail-ballot election compared to 11% for our LOB traditional election conducted in 2008.

Thank you for your consideration. Our association members respectfully request you support Senate Substitute for SB 171 in its current format. I am available to stand for questions at the appropriate time.