

MINUTES OF THE House COMMITTEE ON Elections

The meeting was called to order by Representative Richard L. Harper at
Chairperson

9:00 am a.m./p.m. on Thursday, February 28, 1985 in room 521-S of the Capitol.

All members were present except: Representative Guldner, excused
Representative Johnson, excused

Committee staff present: Myrta Anderson, Legislative Research Department
Ramon Powers, Legislative Research Department
Mary Hack, Revisor of Statutes Office
Eric Rucker, Secretary of State's Office
Dottie Musselman, Committee Secretary

Conferees appearing before the committee:
Representative Norman Justice
Gerald R. Williams, Chairperson, Wyandotte County
voter Registration Committee
Dorothy M. Nelson, NAACP

Chairperson Harper called the meeting to order. HB 2395, An Act relating to the office of commissioner of elections; providing for the election of the commissioner, was the first order of business for today. Representative Justice was recognized at this time, and he being the main sponsor of this bill gave the committee a short briefing on HB 2395. The Representative told the committee that this bill will allow the constituency of the 4 counties of the state having a population exceeding 130,000, to elect the election officier, as is done in the other counties now, therefore, having more uniformity in the election laws.

Gerald Williams, Chairperson, Wyandotte County Voter Registration Committee, was next to take the floor as a conferee on HB 2395. Mr. Williams appeared before the committee in support of this bill, saying that the measure provides the citizens of Wyandotte County, in particular, to have a voice in the selection of the public official who administers the important function within the system of representative government--the voting process.
(Attachment 1).

The next conferee introduced to the committee was Dorothy M. Nelson, NAACP. Ms. Nelson came before the committee, on behalf of the Kansas State Conference Branches of the NAACP, in support of HB 2395. (Attachment 2).

After a lengthy period of discussion on HB 2395, the hearing closed on this bill for today.

HB 2396 - An Act relating to the office of election commissioner; concerning the appointment of the commissioner, was next up on the agenda for hearing. Again, Representative Justice gave the committee a short briefing of this bill. As there were no questions, the hearing closed.

HB 2401 - An Act relating to elections; concerning county election officers, was open for hearing. Representative Justice gave the committee an insight on this bill. At this time, there were no questions, and the hearing closed.

Attention was now called to HB 2155 - An Act concerning elections and political parties; restrictions on certain activities by certain corporations. Hearings had previously been held on this bill, so at this time Representative Foster made a motion to recommend HB 2155 favorably for passage. Seconded by Representative Crumbaker. Motion carried.

Representative Justice moved to accept the minutes of the February 21, 1985, meeting. Seconded by Representative Crumbaker. Motion carried.

Meeting adjourned.

WYANDOTTE COUNTY VOTER REGISTRATION COMMITTEE

February 28, 1985

The Wyandotte County Voter Registration Committee is a proponent of House Bill #2395 which provides for the election of county election officers in the four (4) counties in our State where we presently have Election Commissioners appointed by the Secretary of State. We support this measure because it provides the citizens of Wyandotte County, in particular, to have a voice in the selection of the public official who administers this vitally important function within our system of representative government--the voting process. We believe that it is unfair to taxpayers to make them foot the bill for this office but have no voice in who is placed in this office. Additionally, voter registration efforts will be enhanced by the involvement of local citizens in the selecting of their county election officer.

Over the past months we have been involved in a voter registration campaign to significantly increase the number of registered voters in Wyandotte County. While this effort was successful, it was also cumbersome and unnecessarily tedious due, in large part, to the inconsistencies and lack of uniformity in the process throughout the State. We found that while one county registered citizens one way, Wyandotte County registered voters another and the other, even another way, left largely up to the discretion of the appointed Election Commissioner. We asked the question--don't the citizens of these counties have some input into what process will be used? The answer we recieved in Wyandotte County was no you don't.

The present system in our State is unjust. If citizens want to implement changes

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(attachment - 1)

in the system and it is at the discretion of county election officials to make such changes it would seem that these changes would be given consideration. If the county election officials served at the pleasure of the county residents there would be more accountability and increased support for the important work this office does.

We have attached to this statement letters of support from city officials, State officials and community leaders. Also attached are news clippings and a petition containing 790 signatures asking for a change in the present process. All of these materials were submitted to our local election official but were not given consideration. We encourage you to take a close look at this measure and support its passage.

Gerald R. Williams
Chairperson
Wyandotte County Voter Registration Committee
1203 N. 18th St. Apt. 302
Kansas City, Kansas 66102



(Attachment 2)

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People Kansas State Conference of Branches

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February 28, 1985

We, the Kansas State Conference ^{of} Branches ~~of~~ the NAACP, are proponents of House Bill #2395. In observing registration efforts in Wyandotte County, throughout 1984, we were cognizant of the deficiencies of the current systems of selecting deputy voter registrars.

The fifteen registration stations in Wyandotte County were not sufficient to register many voters that could have been registered under a volunteer voter registration system.

Voter registration by the Wyandotte County Voter Registration Committee on weekennds, primarily, produced appoximately 5,000 prospective registrants from January to October, 1984. A portion of of this number of prospective registrants were not registered due to the current system of filing request for application forms instead of appointing volunteer deputy registrars. The latter system is used in Sedgewick and Shawnee counties in our State.

We are confident that qualified deputy volunteers could function as well as current deputy registrars.

The elective process should improve ~~the~~ this situation.

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(attachment # 2)