

SCOTT SCHWAB
Secretary of State



Memorial Hall, 1st Floor
120 S.W. 10th Avenue
Topeka, KS 66612-1594
(785) 296-4564
sos.ks.gov

STATE OF KANSAS

January 30, 2025

Testimony on HB2021 (Oral Proponent)

House Committee on Elections

Submitted: Tuesday, January 27, 2025

Chairman Proctor and members of the Committee:

The Secretary of State supports HB2021 which grants the authority to adopt regulations governing remote ballot boxes.

Background:

Remote ballot boxes have been authorized under Kansas law since 1978. Whether a county employs remote boxes is left to the discretion of the county election officer.

Their use grew substantially in 2020, and remote ballot boxes are regularly used by county election officers in elections across the state.

Remote box use in recent elections:

20 Counties: None	3 Counties: 4 boxes
45 Counties: 1 box	Wyandotte Cty: 6; Riley Cty: 7; Johnson Cty:
27 Counties: 2 boxes	8: Douglas Cty: 9; Sedgwick Cty: 14.
5 Counties: 3 boxes	

To date, there has never been a report of a ballot being returned through a remote ballot box that had not been requested by a registered voter.

Remote boxes are becoming increasingly important to the Kansas election system because of the steadily slower delivery time for mail. Kansas has a compact period of time between ballots being mailed out and election day. Kansas mails ballots 20 days before the election. Voters, therefore, need a reliable and predicable method of returning mail ballots.

Some legislators have asked about lengthening the amount of time a voter has to apply for and return a ballot prior to Election Day. It is important to understand the cascading effect of moving any deadlines as they relate to each other, e.g. voter registration deadlines; and impact on county election office resources - more temporary board workers; higher costs to process returned ballots; requiring weekend hours are some examples.

Reason to Grant Regulatory Authority:

The Secretary seeks regulatory authority to establish minimum common standards for remote boxes, limited to three specific areas.

(1) the physical security and locations of the remote box, including a requirement for 24/7 video surveillance during the period where ballots are being transmitted and returned,

(2) chain of custody procedures for ballots removed from the remote boxes and returned to the county election office, and

(3) accessibility to the remote boxes to ensure compliance with the Americans with Disability Act.

Respectfully,

Clayton Barker

Clayton L. Barker
Deputy Secretary of State, General Counsel
Clay.Barker2@ks.gov