

Date: **2-5-2025**

Conferee/Presenter: **Jim Fouts**

Group Represented: **Self**

Bill Number: **HB2023**

Disposition: **Opponent**

Testimony: **Written Only**

Chairman Proctor, **Vice Chair** Waggoner, **Ranking Minority Member** Haskins, **Committee Members:** Bergkamp, Bergquist, Chauncey, Helwig, James, Meyer, Miller, Penn, Simmons, Sutton, Tarwater, Williams

HB2023

If HB2023 were to become law it would be a major overreach of government authority. This would be very similar to making it a crime for parents to show up at a school board meeting and question the school board officials about what they are teaching their children. It is very likely employees and officials at many government offices especially the tax office have been subjected to verbal abuse. The people being verbally abusive are upset but they should not be criminals. Employees and owners of all private sector businesses have to occasionally deal with the unhappy, irate, irrational and verbally abusive customer or client. It is part of doing business and these are usually the result of misunderstanding or poor communication. They are not criminal offenses. Physical assault referred to in line 8 (*or through physical acts,*) is already illegal if a person were to go that far. When verbal abuse extends beyond reason law enforcement could and should be called.

If it is a crime to report or call out suspicious activity by election officials while conducting their official duties, maybe it should be a crime for election officials to pull suitcases of ballots out from under illegally skirted tables after counting "stopped" and run them through tabulators over night as caught on security camera footage in the State Farm Arena in Georgia during the 2020 election along with many other observations by citizens reported in senate and house testimony in many other states in the years following that election. One should ask if this bill became law would it provide a road block allowing potential corrupt behavior of election officials themselves. The intent of this bill while protecting election officials from the occasional incident of a disruptive person could create protection for corrupt behavior by election officials and therefore a loss in the already eroded integrity of our election process.

Lines 6 thru 13 try to define what constitutes interference when all the adjectives themselves are subjective to someone's interpretation. At what point does a conversation become *intimidating, threatening, coercing etc.* This interpretation by election officials that may not want to be bothered or simply do not like a person could be a serious overreach causing a citizen to spend time and money to clear themselves of a criminal accusation.

Another thing concerning about this bill if made into law is the suppression of public oversight of the election process. Why would a citizen speak up or write a report of suspicious activity by an election official when they are facing the potential accusation of committing a crime? This would be like suppressing whistle blower activity.

The intent of this bill is understandable. No one likes to deal with irrational harassment behavior by a few in our society but the unintended consequences of this bill's potential overreach could adversely affect the oversight of our election process by citizens and result in more distrust of election officials themselves and in our election process. What is the next government agency that will want this protection from the citizens?

Respectfully Submitted

Jim Fouts

Members of Business Owners for Election Integrity

Greg Seiler, DVM	Goddard, Kansas	Founder & Former Owner Heartland Veterinary Services, Inc
Jim Fouts	Goddard, Kansas	Tanganyika Wildlife Park
Dennis Woods	Clearwater, Kansas	Woods Tree Farm
Fred Gorges	Clearwater, Kansas	FCG Inc. Fed Ex Ground
Kent Seiler	Garden Plain, Kansas	ECI Electrical Contractors, Inc of Wichita
George Burwell	Goddard, Kansas	Burwell Construction
George Palmer	Clearwater, Kansas	GK Tires Wichita Kansas
Kevin Seiler	Colwich, Kansas	Seiler Forming
William Kramer	Goddard, Kansas	Kramer Trucking
Dr. Dwight L Lindholm	Wichita, Kansas	Pediatric Neurology