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February 6, 2025 - Kansas House Elections Committee hearing on HB 2016, regarding including private online obituary notices as sufficient grounds for removal of a deceased voter from the voter registration books – Proponent testimony

Chairman Proctor and Distinguished Committee Members,

My name is Rick Piepho, Harvey County Clerk and Chairman of the Elections Committee of the Kansas County Clerks and Election Officials Association (KCCEOA). The KCCEOA is a statewide organization with 109 members including all county clerks and election commissioners in Kansas. Our members are dedicated to ensuring free, fair, and efficient elections, which is a responsibility we take very seriously.

I am submitting this testimony on behalf of the KCCEOA membership to express our strong support for House Bill 2016. The KCCEOA, through a thoughtful and collaborative policy committee process, has developed a legislative agenda that reflects the collective priorities of our members. One of the key points in our agenda is to “Advocate for provisions to effectively clean voter rolls.”

We believe that election officials should have the ability to utilize multiple sources to confirm the death of a registered voter, ensuring that voter rolls remain accurate and up-to-date. In light of the decreasing circulation and availability of print newspapers, as well as rising publication costs, many families have opted not to publish obituaries in traditional newspapers. However, most funeral homes now maintain websites where obituaries are posted and can be cross-checked with voter registration information. These online obituaries provide the critical data needed to confirm a voter’s death and allow election officials to proceed with the removal of deceased voters from the rolls.

Furthermore, many funeral homes offer email subscription services to notify subscribers when new obituaries are posted. This makes it easier for election officials to monitor and verify deaths for local registrants and those who may have utilized funeral homes outside their immediate area.

The KCCEOA supports HB 2016 and respectfully urges this committee to act favorably on this bill. I will gladly stand for questions at the appropriate time.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Rick Piepho  
Harvey County Clerk & Election Officer – KCCEOA Elections Committee Chair