

To: Kansas House Election Committee

From: Beverly Gossage

Subject: HB2507

Date: January 27, 2016

To: Chairman Mark Kahrs, Vice Chair Keith Esau, Ranking Minority Member Tom Sawyer and other distinguished members of the Committee

I am here to speak in favor of HB 2507.

I have assisted in helping many candidates by walking door to door, making phone calls, stuffing and mailing literature, and passing out candy or carrying banners in parades. Not once did I consider their place of residence as a deciding factor as to whether I would support them.

I encourage you to ask yourself this question: Why do we list the candidate's town after their name on the ballot?

In what way does a candidate's place of residence determine his potential performance in elected office?

I think we can all agree that a candidate's experience, leadership capabilities, knowledge and positions on the issues are better measures to predict how a candidate will perform when in office.

Though location has no impact on how one will serve in office, we know that low information voters have been known to select a candidate based solely upon their residence listed on the ballot.

In statewide elections where the identity of the candidates are not well known, it creates a distinct disadvantage for those whose residences are in small towns. This also happens in smaller districts -- school board races, for instance, that cover multiple cities - the residences of a city tend to vote for the candidate from that city. The statistics are staggering on this.

Candidates shouldn't get automatic votes based on residency listed. Yes, if they have a history of activity in an area, that's fine, as that is based on years of work within that area, not based on the fact their city is next to their name. Some people have a city after their name because their mail is delivered from there. My address is Eudora because our mail comes from there, but we are on the Johnson County side of our rural road and in the DeSoto School District. Technically we don't have a town, we are in a township called Lexington township. Which would you put on the ballot after my name? Should that matter at the ballot box?

When I ran for statewide office in 2014, I was privileged to meet great people in urban and rural Kansas in all 105 counties. I am sure that we can agree that everyone should have an equal playing field to run for office regardless if they are from Blue Mound (population 275), Utica (population 158), Norcatur (population 151), Freeport (population 5) or Wichita (population 382,368)

In this day of technology and easy access to data and information, if a voter wants to know a candidate's residence, they can easily look it up. So, removing the names of the town from the ballot might actually help encourage voters to study the candidates.

I think we can all agree that more informed voters are not a bad thing.

I encourage you to vote for HB 2507.

Beverly Gossage is the President of HSA Benefits Consulting and a licensed insurance agent. She ran for KS Insurance Commissioner in the 2014 election.