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House Committee on Elections
Testimony on SSB 8
Jamie Shew, Douglas County Clerk

Chairman Esau and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SSB 8 and for the continued opportunity to raise awareness of the impact of recent postal reforms on mail advance ballots.

I support SSB 8 for the same reasons outlined in my testimony presented to this committee in support of HB 2158. The recent changes in the U.S. Postal Service require action to address increased time mail delivery across the state. As I mentioned with HB 2158, states are being encouraged to consider legislation which meets the reality of new delivery structures and times. As more voters are utilizing mail advance ballots, continuing to utilize statutes written during different era of postal delivery will result in a higher amount of votes not counted.

I strongly support the provisions in SSB 8 which move the deadline to request an advance ballot. K.S.A. 25-1122 establishes the Friday before an election as the deadline to apply for a mail ballot. In SSB 8, the deadline to request an advance ballot is moved to the Tuesday prior to an election. During the 2016 Election, the U.S. Postal Service stated ballots must be requested and sent at minimum one week prior to the election to guarantee receipt of the ballot. Recently, the U.S. Postal Service requested states consider moving any deadline that was within one week of the election, states with late application deadlines are considered unserviceable and encourage changes in those deadlines to reflect accurate delivery time. As stated in my testimony for HB 2158, the lack of weekend processing means mail sent late Friday cannot be processed until the following Monday. When voters request a ballot on that Friday, our office policy is to instruct the voter that by law we are required to fulfill the request to send the ballot but our office makes no guarantee the ballot will be received by Election Day. The Friday request date is no longer applicable, even for across town requests, the change is not only necessary to meet the new delivery schedules but to communicate new realistic expectations to voters requesting mailed ballots.

Thank you for your support of these issues which was evident in your passage of HB 2158, respectfully request you support SSB 8 provisions for deadline changes and encourage your support of additional legislation which would maintain a voter centric approach to elections in Kansas. I am available to stand for questions at the appropriate time.