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JUSTICE OVERSIGHT

March 7, 2018
Testimony in Support of SB264

House Elections Committee

Honorable Chair – Representative Keith Esau
Vice Chair – Representative Blake Carpenter
Ranking Minority – Representative Vic Miller
Honorable Committee Members

Good morning Mr. Chairman and other esteemed members of the Committee.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of Senate Bill number 264. After the November 7th election in Wichita for the city council and school board members, a number of disabled Kansas voters in conjunction with the Cerebral Palsy Foundation and The Timbers have brought to my attention a series of obstacles within existing voting laws, that inhibit the ability of our disabled citizens to cast their ballots. These complications were illustrated in a Wichita Eagle article published on November 13, 2017. In this article, Rocky Nichols, the executive director of the Kansas Disability Rights Center, said “it defies common sense to require a person who is physically incapable of filling out a ballot to try to sign it.” These statements and more, compelled me to advocate for changes to ensure that all people of Kansas can participate in our democratic institution without the presence of unreasonable handicaps.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, I understand there are ways to tackle this issue through the Secretary of State’s office. However, it is my belief that voting is vital to the fabric of our institution and that it is the duty of the legislature to fix and improve this fundamental component to the continuation of democracy. With that said, I strongly urge my fellow legislators to support Senate Bill 264.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Senator Oletha Faust-Goudeau