

Neutral Testimony on House Bill 2332

House Committee on Elections

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Chair Carpenter, Members of the Committee,

A Unique 2020 Election

The 2020 pandemic created an extremely unique election circumstance. The increase in advance mail ballot applications identified issues in under-resourced county election offices and an underdeveloped advance ballot application system without integration into the statewide voter database. Repetitive large scale advance ballot application mailers caused some voter confusion; however, that confusion was amplified by a massive backlog and delay in counties processing mail ballot applications.

The 2020 Kansas Mailers Would Have Been in Compliance

The application mailers from 2020 that we documented would have already been in or nearly in compliance with the standards proposed under HB2332. They clearly stated what organization the mailer was coming from and contained a disclaimer that they were not a government agency. Further, they contained return envelopes for the application that were properly addressed to the local county elections office.

Secretary of State Urged Caution on Topic

Secretary of State Scott Schwab noted the mail ballot application mailer concern in his brief to this committee in January. Secretary Schwab cautioned that the issue was complex and that if this committee chooses to address the topic it should do so through an interim committee that can fully explore the issue and carefully craft adjustments if necessary.

Exploring Improvements Instead of Restrictions

Many of the issues that arose in the 2020 election and caused voter confusion may be better addressed by exploring improvements to the state's election infrastructure and election education programs. If Kansas instituted online mail ballot applications, real mail ballot tracking, and more robust public education programs around elections we could create an environment where it would be absolutely unnecessary for any third party group to mail out applications.

I'm happy to stand for any questions when appropriate. Thank you.

Davis Hammet