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STATE OF KANSAS

Testimony on HB2579 (Oral Proponent)

House Committee on Elections
Tuesday, February 15, 2022

Chairman Bergquist and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB2579.

HB2579 requires campaign finance reports for all candidates to be filed electronically with the Secretary of State's online filing system. This bill saves staff hours by eliminating the scanning, reviewing, and processing of paper campaign finance reports, and reduces the possibility of human errors.

Under current state law, campaign finance reports may be filed with our office in one of three ways:

1. The campaign treasurer may file by paper – often handwritten – forms that are physically delivered or mailed to our office. These reports are examined, redacted as appropriate, then scanned with the .pdf copy uploaded to the filing system for public access. Common issues with tangible filing are illegibility, and unnecessary personal identification information that must be redacted, such as bank account and Social Security numbers.
2. The campaign treasurer may enter the data directly into the filing system. The system automatically saves data until the report is ready for final submission.
3. The campaign treasurer may upload data from a spreadsheet or commercial software to the filing system. The most common reason a file is rejected by the system is when an Excel spreadsheet is improperly formatted.

Statewide campaigns may only file by directly entering or uploading campaign finance report data. Once the campaign finance report is uploaded to the filing system, a copy is sent to the Kansas Governmental Ethics Commission for their review and processing. A filed campaign finance report is thereby immediately accessible by the public.

During a previous appearance before the Senate Transparency and Ethics Committee, our office discussed the current capabilities of the e-filing system, and planned advancements. Following that discussion our office is prepared to offer the following proposals:

1. Construct a working group to receive and share input, offer training and tutorials, and coordinate adjustments to the software. It is a priority of our office to make significant upgrades to the system within next few years, and we look forward to working alongside stakeholders to improve the user's experience.
2. If there are concerns with immediately implementing mandatory e-filing, set a future date when improvements to the system must be completed and training provided to the users.

HB2579 promotes transparency in campaign finance reporting and efficiency in state government operations. We appreciate the opportunity to provide comments on this bill.

Respectfully submitted,

Clay Barker
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