



2023 - 2024 Executive board

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March 12, 2024 - hearing on Sub for HB 2512, relating to in-person advance voting deadline – Neutral testimony

Chairman Thompson and Distinguished Members of the Senate Federal and State Affairs Committee,

My name is Rick Piepho, Harvey County Clerk and Chairman of the Elections Committee of the Kansas County Clerks and Elections Officials Association (KCCEOA). The KCCEOA is a statewide organization with 109 members including all county clerks and election commissioners in Kansas. Our duties are significant under statute and one of our most publicly facing functions is free and fair administration of elections. We take this duty very seriously. We prepare for every possible, and impossible, scenario which could occur.

I am submitting this testimony on behalf of the KCCEOA membership. We believe that the legislature sets the policy, and we implement it. We follow the laws and regulations to allow the public to participate in free and fair elections. The KCCEOA prepared a legislative agenda which was developed through a policy committee process and agreed to by a majority of the members. One of the items specifically included is: "Maintain the status quo with regard to election, registration and canvass schedules...".

I am confident that many election officials would appreciate the reduced workload on the day prior to each election by changing the deadline for in-person early voting from noon on Monday to 7:00 p.m. on Sunday. The day before each election is very busy with final Election Day preparations and delivery of equipment and supplies to polling places. This change would allow more time to prepare final pollbooks, but there are many in-person voters that are used to voting on Monday until noon. Since this is a presidential election year with the highest turnouts, to make a significant change like this could be upsetting or confusing to voters so we agree that it should not be implemented until 2025. In my county we regularly have more voters in the 4-hour period on Monday than we have on some of the other 9 days we are open; historically about 10% of our total early voters vote on that Monday. We appreciate adding the option to provide early voting on Sunday. I am unsure how many election offices would choose to expand their early voting days, but they should have the option to do so based on the needs of their respective jurisdictions.

We disagree with every county being required to provide at least 4 hours of early in-person voting on the Saturday preceding every election. While many counties do offer early voting on that Saturday for every election, some only offer that option for statewide General Elections and some do not offer that option due to staffing issues or the needs of their jurisdictions. Many of the smaller counties have very few staff members and fulfilling this requirement would create additional cost for overtime or temporary staff. Some counties reported that they were open for voting on Saturday a few times, but the turnout was so low that they didn't feel like the extra costs were justified. Early in-person voting on Saturday should remain an option for jurisdictions to serve their respective voters. While we appreciate the possibility of reducing the workload on the day before the election we do not feel that adding workload on the weekend is a viable tradeoff.

The KCCEOA is neutral on Sub for HB 2512 as currently presented, but we ask that the committee hear our concerns and act accordingly. I will not be able to attend the hearing so we are providing written testimony only on this bill.

Sincerely,

Rick Piepho
Harvey County Clerk & Election Officer – KCCEOA Elections Committee Chair