



2023 - 2024 Executive board

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January 23, 2024 - Kansas House Elections Committee hearing on HB 2504, relating to election audits – Neutral testimony

Chairman Proctor and Distinguished Committee Members,

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 public 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. You pass the laws, the Secretary of State works with you to develop and adopt rules, and we follow the law and regulations in an attempt to allow the public to participate in free and fair elections while complying with your intent and the Secretary's guidance. We understand and agree with the intent to build on the already secure election processes in Kansas and increasing voter confidence. The KCCEOA prepared a legislative agenda which was developed through a policy committee process and agreed to by a majority of the members.

We generally agree with this requirement that the physical paper ballots be used for post-election audits instead of images of the ballots. Most counties already use the paper ballots instead of images for their audits. Not all of the tabulation systems used by counties have the capability to electronically sort and display the images. The tabulation system utilized in Harvey County prior to 2022 did not have this capability, but our current system does have this capability so we have been using the images for our audits of the last few elections as allowed by current regulations. I plan to revert to using the physical ballots for future audits regardless of whether this bill becomes law. I would like to note that it is more time consuming to sort the voted paper ballots by precinct, but there should not be a significant cost increase for most of the counties that currently use ballot images.

The KCCEOA is neutral on HB 2504 as currently presented, but we ask that the committee hear our concerns and act accordingly. I will gladly stand for questions at the appropriate time.

Sincerely,

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