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STATE OF KANSAS

House Committee on Elections

Testimony on HB 2158

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Kansas Secretary of State's office

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Madam Chairwoman and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill 2158. This bill changes the deadline to submit an advance voting ballot by mail. Current law requires that any ballot cast by mail be received in the county election office by close of polls on Election Day. There are no exceptions to this law. This bill would allow ballots that are cast by mail, with a postmark on or before Election Day, be counted if the United States Postal Service delivers the ballots by the third day following the election to the election office or to any polling place within the county. A special election board, or the county Board of Canvassers, would be convened to canvass the ballots in a manner consistent with all other ballots submitted in advance. This bill would also give the Secretary of State the authority to promulgate rules and regulations to implement this provision.

The Secretary of State's office welcomes a discussion on the best manner in processing ballots that are transmitted and returned by mail. The United States Postal Service has decreased the number of locations that process mail in the state of Kansas. As a result, an increase in the amount of time needed to transmit mail has occurred in the last few years in Kansas (and across the country).

I am testifying as a proponent of this bill. There is concern that in a few years, many people will wait until the last minute to return by mail their ballots and flood election offices with returned ballots prior to the meeting of the county board of canvassers. The Secretary of State's office would also like to see a discussion on the deadline to request a ballot to be mailed. Current law allows a ballot request to be submitted until 5:00 p.m. on the Friday before the election. In most instances, there is not enough time for a ballot to be transmitted to the voter and the voter return the ballot by mail prior to the deadline.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of this bill, and I stand for any questions.