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February 14, 2019

Honorable Kansas State Senator Elaine Bowers
Chair, Senate Ethics, Elections and Local Government Committee and Distinguished Members of the Committee

Re: Senate Bill 131, Concerning Election Filing Dates & Township Officer Oaths

Chairman Bowers and Distinguished Committee Members,

As Harvey County Clerk and Election Officer, I thank you for your time in allowing me to testify as a proponent of this bill.

I believe that this bill adequately addresses some issues that remained after statutory changes were made a few years ago affecting filing deadlines and oaths for elected officials.

The first part of this bill addresses changing the candidate filing deadline for officers of municipalities such as extension districts and drainage districts where a primary election is not needed or required. Changing the date from September 1 to the day before the primary election date would align this deadline with the current deadline for other offices or candidates that proceed directly to the general election ballot such as district court judicial retention and independent candidates. The current September 1 deadline causes county election officers to wait until after that date to begin producing the ballots for the General Election in November. Since September 1 is about 65 days prior to the November election date, county election officers are left with about 20 days for ballot production since we are required by federal law to begin transmitting ballots to military and overseas voters beginning 45 days prior to each election.

The second part of this bill addresses when township officers shall take and subscribe the oath of office for the position they were elected to in the November general election. Currently these officers are required to take the oath for their office within 20 days of being elected even though they do not take office until the second Monday in January like all other state, county and local officers. These oaths for township officers should be administered upon taking office like other elected offices.

I support passing SB 131 in its current form.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Rick Piepho".

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