

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ELECTIONS

TESTIMONY – HB 2054

JANUARY 28, 2021

Honorable Chairman and Committee:

Please accept my testimony in opposition to HB 2054. This bill is a solution looking for a problem. There is no problem in Kansas with people other than family members and caregivers delivering advance ballots to election offices. None. In fact, helping voters get their ballots to the election office makes our elections more fair for everyone. Authorizing signatures on the ballot envelope ensure the voter knows who is returning their ballot. Restricting delivery to family members and caregivers is a thinly veiled attempt to suppress the vote and should be summarily rejected.

I have helped dozens of Kansas citizens get their ballots delivered to the election office on time. Sometimes they needed help because they were elderly and homebound. Sometimes it was for a busy stay-at-home mom who could not deliver it herself. Sometimes people just forgot, and it was too late to mail. Some mistakenly thought they were too late to return a ballot when there was still time. Once I made a 50-mile journey to make sure one voter's ballot was at the election office on time as he was wheelchair-bound and lived in the country. Believe it or not, there are thousands of Kansas voters each election who appreciate getting help with their ballot who have no family members available and have no caregiver. To deny help to these folks is to deny their right to vote.

It is unclear what is meant by "is otherwise authorized by law" (line 10), but it is clear only a very limited number of people could help a voter if this unnecessary bill became law. The threat of a felony charge is clearly meant to intimidate anyone who might want to help a voter return their mail ballot, even a family member. To even think about passing this voter suppression bill is a travesty.

I would be glad to discuss further at your convenience. Having served two years as the ranking minority member on this committee provided an insight into what is and what is not a real issue with Kansas elections. Voter suppression is a real problem. Helping folks get their ballots to the election office is not.

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