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DOUGLAS COUNTY CLERK

1100 Massachusetts, Lawrence, KS 66044

Friday, August 13th – Lawrence

Written and Oral Testimony

Chairman Croft and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on the upcoming re-districting process. While I know the legislature did not draw the district maps in 2012, I would like to highlight two examples of problems which resulted from that process in the hope they can be avoided in 2022.

First, timing of the final maps is vital for a successful election in 2022. When the maps are approved, the election office has to create new maps, move voters into correct districts and prepare ballots which reflect those changes. This process takes time to properly move voters into the new districts, especially when they have multiple changes. In 2012, the new maps were released a few days before the filing deadline which was just a couple of weeks before the Uniform Overseas Citizens Voting Act deadline which requires ballots to be mailed 45 days prior to an election. Our office worked overtime with multiple layers of quality control trying to verify voters were receiving the right ballots for Douglas County, the new district lines plus the required candidate rotation resulted in over 110 ballot styles. In addition to preparing the ballots, new voter information cards need to be produced and mailed so voters are aware of their new districts. To avoid potential mistakes and stress on local election offices, I encourage all involved with the redistricting process to complete redistricting with sufficient time for our offices to complete our work.

Second, the 2012 redistricting resulted in a number of problematic divisions, especially in the townships. For example, Willow Springs Township, located south of Lawrence which has 1,165 voters. Prior to 2012, the residents were part of a single House and Senate district. The 2012 map, drawn by the court, divided the township by House district horizontally and Senate district vertically resulting in 4 different voting districts and ballots; S19 H45, S19 H54, S3 H45 and S3 H54. During a partisan primary, there are 8 different ballots to be distributed. If the districts remain the same in 2022, with the addition of non-partisan ballot for the Constitutional Amendment, Willow Spring would have 12 different ballots. I have attached a map of Willow Springs Township to illustrate the four areas. Additionally, the dividing line for the two house districts in the SW part of Douglas County is a large utility line which dissects farms and properties, our office had to look at aerial maps to see if a residence was north or south of the utility line. These divisions not only increase the cost of election administration and create potential confusion at the polling place, it divides communities of interest like the neighbors of Willow Springs Township.

Thank you for your service in this important process.

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