



EQUALITY ♦ LAW ♦ JUSTICE

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February 7, 2023
Opponent for HB 2086
Oral Testimony

Chairman Proctor and members of the committee:

My name is Mike Burgess. I am the Director of Policy & Outreach at the Disability Rights Center of Kansas (DRC). DRC is a public interest legal advocacy organization that is part of a national network of federally mandated organizations empowered to advocate for Kansans with disabilities. DRC is the officially designated protection and advocacy system in Kansas. DRC is a private, 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation, organizationally independent of state government and whose sole interest is the protection of the legal rights of Kansans with disabilities.

Voting is a fundamental right for the citizens of Kansas, including Kansans with disabilities. In general, DRC is not supportive of policy changes that will limit options or make it more difficult for Kansans with disabilities to either vote or have their vote counted.

The change is Sec. 27 of the bill on page 24 line 40 to change the word “four” to “two” consecutive general elections is a significant policy change buried in this very comprehensive bill. It will essentially make it so an individual with a disability who is currently on the permanent advanced voting list would be removed if they miss voting in elections for two consecutive general elections.

It is not good policy to essentially remove an individual from the permanent advance list after not voting in what could be as short as a 13 month period. With the individuals on the permanent advance voting list, we are talking about individuals with a permanent disability or illness they will have for the rest of their lives.

Further, there are people with disabilities (just like everyone else) who do not always participate in every election. Like many other Kansans, there are voters with disabilities who only choose to vote in presidential elections. Under this change, these voters would have to reapply for the **permanent** advance voting list every presidential election cycle.

While this is proposed as a cost-saving change for counties, the small number of individuals on the permanent advance voting list is not the place to save it.

I ask you to please consider the compounding impact of all of the policy changes that create barriers for individuals to vote. While each individual change may seem small, it will definitely make it more difficult for Kansans with disabilities to vote and have their vote counted.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak on this bill. I would be happy to stand for questions at the appropriate time.