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SB 365

WRITTEN ONLY

OPPONENT

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PRIVATE CITIZEN

Chairman Thompson and Members of the Committee, thank you so much for giving me time to share my thoughts on SB 365 with you today. My name is Emily Rude and I am a voter in Saline County. I am writing today to encourage the committee to vote no on SB365 for the sake of preserving our increasingly fragile democracy.

While I hope this was put forth with the best of intentions, I believe it will ultimately cause otherwise eligible voters to be disenfranchised. There are many reasons why a person might not be able to vote early; voters who mail their ballot at the last minute but nevertheless on time should not be denied their rights if matters outside of their control cause the mail to be delayed. I am unconvinced that counting ballots slightly delayed in the postal system would put undue burden on the election process. It is far more important to make sure that everyone's vote is counted. Otherwise, we are not holding true to our American values of democracy and encouraging civic participation. Unless, of course, that is the true underlying purpose behind this bill. I hope it is not.

Again, there are many reasons why a voter might mail their ballot at the last minute. In these times of economic hardship, working people are busier and more distracted than ever. It's not our job as engaged, caring American citizens to make voting harder for working people with many demands on their time. As for myself, I live in a rural area and commute to my workplace at a small religiously-affiliated college. I work long hours six days a week. My polling place is in the opposite direction of my commute. Even if I do not happen to fall ill during election week, or take on an extra task at work, or once again suffer rat damage to my vehicle so that I must ride-share with a neighbor, or if any number of unforeseen events happen close to Election Day, it is simply more convenient to send in a mail-in ballot. And if that mail-in ballot is actually posted before the end of Election Day despite my schedule, which of our American values is upheld by throwing it out if the postal service does not deliver it in time? Not our value of democracy. Not our value of civic engagement.

It has been my impression that this legislature wishes to express respect for working people. It has also been my impression that this legislature wishes to express respect for the rural communities of Kansas, where postal service is more likely to be slow. Opposing this bill would add some heft to these sentiments. Supporting this bill contradicts them.

The bottom line is this: if an eligible voter casts their vote in good faith and on time by election day, however last-minute, their vote should be counted -- regardless of whether that person relies on a rural postal system or not. If this bill passes, it will send a message to voting Kansans that this legislature intends to make voting as difficult and restrictive as possible, and further bills in the same vein will likely be proposed by these same legislators. I cannot imagine that is what this legislature truly wants, as leaders and stewards of democracy in Kansas.

Once again, I thank you all for hearing my story and thoughts on this bill, and I encourage you all to vote no of the passage of SB 365. Thank you.