

MINUTES OF THE HOUSE ELECTIONS COMMITTEE

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Steve Huebert at 3:30 p.m. on January 21, 2009, in Room 446-N of the Capitol.

All members were present except:

Representative Delia Garcia- excused
Representative Mike Peterson- excused
Representative Scott Schwab- excused

Committee staff present:

Martha Dorsey, Kansas Legislative Research Department
Jill Shelley, Kansas Legislative Research Department
Ken Wilke, Office of the Revisor of Statutes

Conferees appearing before the committee:

Representative Mike Burgess, District 51
Brad Bryant, Deputy Assistant, Secretary of State

Others attending:

See attached list.

Chairman Huebert welcomed committee members and established the parameters for each meeting. He reminisced about the jocularly of former Representative Bill Mason and quoted some humor from his repertoire. He recognized Representative Burgess for introduction of a bill to consider modifications of a previous ruling regarding photo identification and clarification of exemptions, including a free non-driver identification card. The request was accepted without objection as a committee bill.

Brad Bryant, Deputy Assistant, Secretary of State, requested a clean-up bill regarding voter registration to bring state regulations in compliance with federal regulations. The bill was accepted without objection as a committee bill.

Mr. Bryant commented on the election process of 2008, stating the turnout was much higher than predicted. He provided statistics and said the special aspect of the election was the high number of voter registrations. He said near perfect results obtained from pollsters in Kansas counties made the election process successful. Mr. Bryant reported that more than half of voters in Johnson and Sedgwick counties were counted as advanced voting. He provided an outline of his remarks, making comments on each topic (Attachment 1). He said options for the disabled to vote without assistance was a major victory in the 2008 election process.

The Help America Vote Act (HAVA), established in 2002, was a congressional response to the inconsistencies in the voting process in the Florida election of that year. A system of recording identification of convicts, out-of-state residents, and status of death records necessitated a state-wide data base to be in compliance with HAVA. Mr. Bryant said the office will also monitor the overseas voting process, random audits, voting machine reliability, and the counting of paper ballots by hand.

To further facilitate voting, the Secretary of State's office will focus on: first-time voter identification, required training of county election officers, notification of rights, second chance to vote if a mistake is made on the original ballot, authorization of split-shift schedules for poll workers, and provision of mobile election facilities at long-term-care and nursing homes. Mr. Bryant said the electronic voting process still needs improvement. He said that voting by mail is the weak link and involves security issues; a study commission is in place to investigate both internet and ballots-by-mail voting in Kansas.

The Chairman introduced staff from the Kansas Legislative Research Department and the Revisor's Offices. He thanked the conferees for their testimony and bill requests.

The next meeting is scheduled for January 28, 2009. The meeting was adjourned at 4:20 p.m.