

SESSION OF 2015

SUPPLEMENTAL NOTE ON HOUSE BILL NO. 2108

As Amended by House Committee on Elections

Brief*

HB 2108 would require a straight party ticket option be placed on, and only on, the general election ballot. "Straight party ticket" would be defined (in two sections of the bill) as allowing voters to vote for all candidates of one party for all partisan offices by selecting a single party designation on the ballot. An exception would be made in the definition to allow a voter to select a single candidate in another party, or an independent candidate, or cast a write-in vote, and the exception vote for that office would be counted.

The bill would require the straight party ticket option precede the national offices part of the ballot. Only those political parties recognized pursuant to KSA 2014 Supp. 25-302a would be listed in this portion of the ballot. (Currently, these consist of the Democratic, Libertarian, and Republican parties.) The order of the parties would alternate between alphabetical order for gubernatorial elections and reverse alphabetical order for presidential elections.

The bill would specify the instructions to voters on the ballot state, if a voter does not wish to vote a straight party ticket, the party boxes may be left unmarked and the voter may select individual candidates. The ballot further would note the distinction between a straight party ticket vote and a vote for judicial retention, nonpartisan offices or ballot questions.

Relevant changes would be made in statutes for electronic or electromechanical voting systems (including

*Supplemental notes are prepared by the Legislative Research Department and do not express legislative intent. The supplemental note and fiscal note for this bill may be accessed on the Internet at <http://www.kslegislature.org>

automatic tabulating equipment) and optical scanning equipment. These changes would include adding a test of the straight party ticket vote performance to the tests of automatic tabulating equipment and optical scanning equipment.

For electronic or electromechanical voting systems, a requirement would be added that such systems shall reject all votes for a straight party ticket vote when the voter has cast votes for more than one recognized political party in the straight party ticket section of the ballot. An exception to this requirement would be, if a voter votes for more than one recognized political party in the straight party ticket section of the ballot and votes for an office or upon a question submitted, these voting systems shall not reject the votes for the individual office or the question submitted, unless the voter has cast more votes than entitled to cast.

Finally, with respect to optical scanning equipment system requirements, the bill would provide notification when the voter has cast more votes for a recognized political party than the voter is entitled to cast.

Background

The Secretary of State requested introduction of the bill, and was the sole proponent of the bill. In the House Committee on Elections, the Secretary indicated straight party ticket voting should speed up voting and likely would decrease “ballot drop-off” (failure by voters to cast a vote on candidates and issues listed further down the ballot). No neutral or opponent testimony was provided.

The House Committee made clarifying amendments to the bill.

According to the fiscal note prepared by the Division of the Budget, the additional expenditures associated with the bill would be in two categories, as follows: (a) those related to revising training programs and materials, which would be

negligible; and (b) those related to preparing and printing ballots, programming vote tabulation equipment, and incorporating the new information into poll worker training programs, which would increase but the Secretary of State's Office is unable to determine the cost statewide. Any fiscal effect is not reflected in the *FY 2016 Governor's Budget Report*.