



## Shawnee County Commissioner of Elections

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### House Committee on Elections

#### Testimony on SB 37

**Andrew Howell, Shawnee County Election Commissioner**

**February 7, 2017**

Madam Chairman and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in favor of Senate Bill 37.

I think it is important for the provisional process to be provided for voters who wish to vote in a federal race, but have not yet provided their proof of citizenship. This process ensures the counting of all votes that the law allows.

Provisional ballots are a key method of insuring that the right of a voter to have their vote counted is protected and insured. Without the provisional process, there are many risks associated with requiring election workers to make an on the spot determination of a voters particular ballot eligibility. The beauty of the provisional process is that it allows election staff in the week after the election to do the in-depth research and make an accurate and carefully studied recommendation for the board of canvassers, who will ultimately make the final disposition decision for each provisional ballot based on current state law.

I prefer the use of provisional ballots in this circumstance for the following reasons:

- Simplifies and standardizes training of up to 800 election workers in Shawnee County
- Election workers don't have to make a decision on election day as to whether to count these ballots
- Treats all voters in a consistent manner
- Potentially reduces the cost and number of ballot "styles" required to be printed
- Allows time to conduct proper in-depth research on each voter's situation to insure we are protecting the opportunity for their vote to count if at all possible
- Negligible cost for staff time to handle provisional research (anticipate less than 10% increase)
- Voter privacy is respected as required by law as ballots are placed in sealed privacy envelopes and only worked with workers from all party affiliations following a specific written process
- Each provisional would be recommended for a final disposition at canvass as we currently do for all other provisional ballots.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of this bill, and I will stand for any questions.

Andrew Howell

Shawnee County Election Commissioner