

Senate Committee on Elections

Testimony on SB 37

Ronnie Metsker, Johnson County Election Commissioner

February 7, 2017

Madam Chair and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in favor of Senate Bill 37. I have chosen to focus my remarks on how frequently the vote totals are extremely close in any given race in Johnson County. More often than one may realize, a race may be decided with only a handful of votes determining which candidate will be the victor.

Let me briefly give you some background about our county. We are the most populous county in the state, and experts say that sometime in 2017, we will eclipse 600,000 in population. About six weeks prior to the 2016 presidential election, our registered voter count surpassed 400,000 for the first time in history. We are growing in population by about 10,000 per year.

In a county-wide general election primary we will see as many as 1,800 races on the ballot. Even in an odd year, such as 2017, we will see a lot of candidates, due to the large number of jurisdictions – we have 19 municipalities and six school districts, plus other entities that also require elections. We have a lot of candidates.

We also have a lot of elections. In the last 20 years, our office has administered 116 elections. In the last five years, we have averaged over seven elections per year.

One could think that with a higher registered voter population, margins of victory would also be high. Not so. We highlight one key finding:

Many races are decided by a very small margin.

Our team researched Johnson County's 2006-2016 elections (11 years). We were astounded:

728 races were decided by 50 votes or less.

264 races were decided by 10 votes or less.

Every single vote counts. We must take special care to be good stewards of our election process, and maintain the integrity and authenticity of the entire process, from registration to certification of results.

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