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Commissioner - Third District

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
SEDGWICK COUNTY, KANSAS

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House Elections Committee
HB 2512
February 3, 2020

Representative Sutton and members of the committee,

As a member of the Sedgwick County Board of County Commissioners I would like to submit written testimony in support of HB 2512, an issue that impacts both my county and the rest of the state of Kansas. This testimony is on behalf of myself and not of the entire Commission. That issue is voting. The right to vote is mentioned five times in the United States Constitution, and until recently to become a naturalized citizen you had to answer this question, "What is the most important right granted to U. S. Citizens?" The correct answer according to the United States government was the right to vote. I believe that right to vote means that every citizen's choices on a ballot are counted.

One of the duties of a County Commissioner is to canvas the vote following every election. While canvassing the vote in the 2018 primary election, I noticed that well over a thousand provisional ballots were cast because the citizen went to the wrong polling location. Therefore, they were provided a provisional ballot which in most cases only allowed the citizens votes to count in races which were common to the assigned polling location and the polling location they chose to cast a provisional ballot. Usually, the races that were counted were national and possibly statewide offices. This precluded the citizen's vote to count in numerous local contested races. As you know, many local races are determined by just a few votes. I knew that our voting machines which the County Commission recently approved purchasing were capable of allowing that citizen to vote for all of the races they were eligible to vote for since we use those same machines routinely for advanced voting at selected locations. I asked our Election Commissioner why we couldn't use those same machines at any location on Election Day. She told me that we would have to change state statutes to allow that option. As a result, Sedgwick County asked the legislature to change the statute and by an overwhelming majority, Senate Bill 130 was approved, and signed into law.

Sedgwick County ... working for you

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That brings us to today. We all want each of our citizen's choices to count at the ballot box. We also want to offer the greatest service we can to each of our citizens. The answer to both of those wants is to allow Sedgwick County citizens and ultimately all the citizens in Kansas, if that county chooses to do so, the ability to make sure that each vote the citizen casts is fully counted. Please allow our citizens the opportunity to make their voices heard and counted in the critical primary and general elections coming up in 2020.