

Thursday, September 28 and Friday, September 29, 2023
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Written Testimony for Special Elections Committee hearing
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Chair and Members of Special Elections Committee,

As a history and government teacher, the first lesson we do in class is on the principles of democracy. Free and fair elections and accepting the outcome of elections are on the list. Although no system is perfect, here in Kansas we are privileged to have outstanding public servants such as Scott Schwab as Secretary of State and Jamie Shew, Douglas County clerk, ensuring the integrity of our election process. I have seen firsthand as a poll worker in my own Lawrence precinct the extraordinary precautions and security around our elections, and the dedication and care of the folks who work to keep our elections free, fair, and safe.

Therefore I observe with grave concern the attempt to sow disinformation about the integrity of our elections here in Kansas or anywhere else in the United States. On January 6th 2021 we saw how malicious actors intentionally sowed mistrust in the election outcome in order to stoke a violent attack on democracy. Thomas Jefferson's right to revolution has become twisted and distorted by those who wish to consolidate power at the expense of our democratic institutions. This is why I am skeptical about these hearings. According to the national Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, and our own Kansas Secretary of State, there are already adequate protections in place and incidents of election fraud are in fact vanishingly rare. Only hearing today and tomorrow from explicitly conservative special interest groups like the Liberty Lions League and the Foundation for Government Accountability, organizations whose aims coincide with supporters of the January 6th insurrection, elevates a false and damaging narrative about our elections. I don't question these groups' right to voice their opinions, unfounded by fact as they may be, but where is the balance?

Allowing the voices on only one side to dominate the airtime in these hearings gives the wrong impression and feeds into an ongoing international effort to sow distrust in election systems that actually function well and fairly. This is incredibly dangerous. This impression of instability and distrust serves the interest of bad actors domestically, and of states globally, like Russia and China, that pour resources into disinformation campaigns, all with the goal of seeing the United States and its democracy fail.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.

Sonja Czarnecki

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