



Shawnee County Commissioner of Elections

Andrew Howell
Election Commissioner
Mark A. Stock
Assistant Election Commissioner

3420 SW Van Buren Street
Topeka, Kansas 66611
FAX (785) 251-5999
TEL (785) 251-5900

House Committee on Elections

Testimony on HB 2225

Andrew Howell, Shawnee County Election Commissioner

February 20, 2017

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in opposition to HB 2225.

While I appreciate the intent of this bill I think it is important to consider a number of issues related to opening up the ability of every voter to be placed on a "permanent advance voting status".

In reality it appears to me that what we are really doing here is opening up a permanent mail ballot election process in Kansas. As a policy matter I would think the legislature would want to carefully consider the full impact of that approach to elections. With the current issues we are having with the Post Office taking as much as 4 to 7 days to deliver mail I think you would want to do much more in-depth research on this prior to making a policy change this large.

In Shawnee County we currently have 2685 voters on the Permanent List. Additionally we saw 5274 voters choose advance ballots by mail in the 2016 General Election. The big news is that most voters are now choosing to vote in the office as a fast convenient method. In the 2016 General that number grew to nearly three times prior numbers coming in at 15,204 voters.

I believe passage of this bill will create/compound the following issues:

- Voter confusion- not understanding that since they are on a permanent list they cannot now vote on election day at a polling place. (More Provisional Ballots/Questions of fraud/intent of voter)
- Increased Provisionals-We will no longer be able to communicate effectively with the large number of voters that would potentially use this "Permanent" option.
- **Decreased ability to provide adequate customer service to persons with disabilities who were the main users of the Permanent Advance Status due to sheer volume.**
- Significant increased staff time and budgeted election costs to provide list maintenance to assure addresses and voter information are accurate and updated for each election.
- Risk of Fraud from mail theft, since significantly more ballots being placed in the mail on the same day,

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

Andrew Howell
Shawnee County Election Commissioner