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Neutral Written-Only Testimony for HB 2086

Aileen Berquist, Policy Director
American Civil Liberties Union of Kansas

House Elections Committee
Tuesday, February 7 at 3:30 – 218-N

Committee Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Aileen Berquist and I am the Policy Director for the ACLU of Kansas. We are a nonpartisan, non-profit organization that works to preserve and strengthen the civil rights and liberties of every person in our state. Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony today.

The ACLU of Kansas is neutral on HB 2086. While we support most of this bill, and the intent to streamline our election statutes, there are two provisions that we stand opposed to.

Edited: 25-1122(j)
In Kansas, eligible voters with permanent disabilities or illness are eligible to be placed on the permanent advance ballot list. This provision would send a notice to people who have not voted in two years asking them to confirm that they want to stay on the permanent advance voting list. If they do not confirm, they will be removed within 30 days of the notice being sent. The current time period for this notice is four years. The ACLU of Kansas believes that these timelines should be as expansive as possible to avoid voter confusion and potential accidental removal from the advance ballot list. Therefore, we oppose this provision.

New: 25-1122(m)
The mailing of ballots is not currently allowed in Kansas unless a voter submits an advance ballot application—this new provision would expressly prohibit it, with the stated legislative intent of prohibiting mass ballot mailings. The ACLU of Kansas believes that voting should be as easy and accessible as possible for all eligible voters and supports the mailing of advance ballots to all voters. We cannot support a provision that expressly prohibits the mailing of ballots in this way into perpetuity.

The ACLU of Kansas asks that these provisions be removed from the bill before passage.