

To: Representative Esau and Members of the House Elections Committee

From: Marge Ahrens and Carole Neal, Co-Presidents, League of Women Voters of Kansas

Re: SB 78 Regarding 30 day notice to voters regarding change of polling places

Date: March 15, 2017

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today on behalf of the League of Women Voters of Kansas regarding SB 78. We are focused on citizen participation in government, and in particular in protecting the right to vote for all.

Senator Faust-Goudeau's bill relates to a very real incident in the November 2016 election in Wichita in which seven polling places were moved just prior to the election. Our Wichita League members noted the confusion, the need to find transportation to another site, as well as the threat of prosecution for trying to vote at the wrong site- as disarming and upsetting for potential voters. Those who had taken time off of work might have missed the opportunity to vote altogether. Quick action brought buses to transport some waiting voters to newly arranged polling sites.

We recognize that on-site voting is expensive to the public, requires more trained workers than a county is sometimes able to attract, and forms a somewhat rigid parameter for the voter in time, place, and transportation. This bill regulates the notification of change of polling place outside of emergencies to a thirty day written notice sent to affected registered voters. We see the legislation as necessary and supportive of the in-person voter.

The circumstances of the in-person voter in Kansas are mindful of the need to explore the mail in ballot for all, either temporary or permanent, based on research of election issues in states which have put the universal mail in ballot into law.