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March 28, 2023

Written Testimony submitted for the record of the Senate Committee on Rules hearing entitled: “State and Local Perspectives on Election Administration.”

Chairwoman Klobuchar, Ranking Member Fischer, and members of the Senate Committee on Rules, I want to thank this Committee for giving local election administrators an opportunity to share our experience and testimony with the committee today. We are already preparing for the 2024 election cycle, and we appreciate today’s hearing.

Across the country, local election administrators are facing the reality that the 2020 election cycle has thrust us into the spotlight and fundamentally changed the perception of our jobs. We’re asked to be experts in everything from cybersecurity to communications, but our resources are limited, causing experienced administrators to leave the field at alarming rates.

Election administration is a close-knit and cooperative community. We share stories, best practices, and, lately, anxieties about future elections. As a county clerk, I work with my Missouri colleagues every day. However, in my personal time, I co-host an election administration podcast called *High Turnout Wide Margins*, in which we interview election officials across the country to amplify their experience conducting elections over the past three years. Those conversations have shown me that our concerns are nearly universal. We are constantly trying to find effective ways to push back on policy proposals that contradict every best practice for successful elections. As we head into 2024, pressure from national advocacy groups and voters preoccupied with November 2020 makes our work that much more daunting.

In Missouri, one of those policy decisions was the state’s decision to withdraw Missouri from the Electronic Registration Information Center (ERIC) this month. ERIC is a nonprofit organization governed by a board of member states and it provides local election administrators with an efficient and cost-effective way to keep voter rolls clean. Missouri’s statewide voter registration database only allows us to update voter records if the voter moves or dies within Missouri, but ERIC let us know if voters moved or died out-of-state. Without that information, our voter rolls will lose integrity because out-of-state and deceased voters stay on our roll longer and we waste our limited resources mailing election materials to voters that no longer reside in

Missouri. The state's withdrawal from ERIC occurred without the input of local election authorities, even though voter rolls are maintained at the county-level.

Shortly after losing a major resource for voter list maintenance, a second proposal to fundamentally change Missouri's election administration began circulating in the state legislature. Since the implementation of the Help America Vote Act of 2002, counties have used tabulating equipment that is certified and tested for every election. Missouri's post-election process also requires counties to conduct a hand count audit of the ballots from 5% of their precincts to ensure the tabulators counted correctly. But Missouri is not immune to national narratives about stolen elections and last week a state senate committee held a hearing on a bill that prohibits tabulators and requires counties to count every ballot by hand.

Missouri's local election administrators proactively compiled data from their November 2022 hand count audits, finding that the hand count was initially inaccurate in many counties. In fact, in one county the election judges had to recount eight times. On the other hand, the tabulator results were correct the first time in every county. The average county employed four counting judges to count 1,010 ballots and the process took seven hours. Data aside, the risk of fraud from intentionally miscounting ballots, delays in reporting results, and the perennial challenge of finding enough poll workers to administer an election should be enough to convince anyone that hand counting is an untenable plan for 2024. Unfortunately, those observations have not deterred advocates and legislators from pressuring counties to hand count in Missouri.

These recent events are not isolated to Missouri. Colleagues in California, Arizona, Michigan, and Ohio are experiencing these same challenges, too, which suggests a national effort. We are already seeing advocacy groups target small counties to loudly criticize mundane administrative decisions, hoping to inject doubt into the outcome of their elections. As November 2024 approaches, I fully expect national pressure to increase on local election officials and counties with minimal staff and very little political experience will be ensnared in a partisan narrative about election integrity. I ask that this committee take to heart the concerns of our local election officials and be prepared to push back on our behalf on this narrative that elections in the United States are broken or untrustworthy. They are not. We work each and every day to ensure they are not. I invite you to visit with me in Boone County, watch our processes, and allow me and my colleagues to answer any questions you have.