

Good afternoon members of the Government Committee. My name is Bri and I am here in my capacity as the director of voting rights with Nebraskans for Civic Reform, a non-partisan non-profit advocacy organizations dedicated to making elections more accessible modern.

Having spoken extensively with Mr. Bena about the turnaround issue he and Senator Craighead are attempting to remedy with LB 682, NCR understands the method but has decided to testify in a neutral capacity specifically because of the deadline proposed in the legislation.

NCR has no issue and supports the language giving the county election officials the flexibility to send ballots out in a special election earlier if ready – and in fact encourage county officials to do so as it will give voters more time with their ballot. However, we have concerns with moving up the deadline to apply by mail for early ballots. Our concerns are with both with the timing, specifically the operative date of June 2016, and the amount of days.

As an advocacy organization focused on the right of the voter, NCR generally does not support election legislation that further burdens the individual voter. We recognize the turn-around issue discussed Mr. Bena, and the solution proposed here is a solution for the election administrator and not necessarily for the voter.

This bill cuts 5 days from the time in which a voter may apply for an early ballot via mail. Constrained by the hours of the election office to

vote early in person, VBM mail applications provide a convenient method for voters to seek a ballot outside of the typical 9 to 5, Monday thru Friday work-week.

As mentioned before, NCR understands the administrative burden placed on the election officials with the post-office closings and delays in service and can see how this bill as written addresses that concern. However we have concerns on the impact the administration's solution would have on the voter.

In evaluating the issue of late return of ballots, we don't see how this bill solves that problem – particularly in special elections where the ballots are sent to every registered voter and mail applications for VBM are less frequent. Even if this bill were to pass as written, completed ballots may still be mailed Saturday yet not be received by 7pm on Election Day. Regardless of the fate of LB 682 this session, we intend to address the voter side of this issue next session and thank Mr. Bena for bringing the issue of delay in postal delivery and its impact on elections to the forefront.

We ask that the committee consider the impact of LB 682 on the voter, especially given the operative date attached and the fact that it is an election year in which the election calendar has already been published and distributed. The operative date as written would create different deadlines for the primary and general elections in 2016. In our attempts to find common ground, a proposed compromise of changing the

language from the second Friday to the Second Monday has been brought up. To assist the committee NCR has compiled a brief analysis and table of state-by-state VBM deadlines that was passed out to you.

I would be happy to answer any questions.