

Testimony of Mark F Kampf – Nye County Clerk

In opposition to AB 242

Currently, in the State of Nevada, Nye County is the only county that made the decision to use paper ballots when voting in person at the polls. This legislation is a challenge to the recommendation by the Nye County Board of County Commissioners, and the decision by the Nye County Clerk, to use paper ballots when voting in person at the polls in the 2022 Midterm General Election.

In 2020 the State of Nevada implemented universal mail-in ballots. In the 2022 Midterm General Election, 68% of the voters in Nye County used their mail ballot and the remaining 32% appeared in person at the polls. At the polls, the option to use a mechanical voting system remained for voters. Out of the 6,426 that voted at the polls, only 249 voters used the mechanical voting system, and the remaining 6,177 voters used a paper ballot, the exact same type of paper ballot that is sent in the mail.

The machines currently in use were purchased in 2017. They were last fully utilized in the 2018 Primary and General Election when all voting was done in person at the polls. None of the machines were used in the 2020 Primary and more than half of the voters used mail-in paper ballots in the 2020 General Election. By the 2022 General Election, 68% of the voters used mail-in ballots. By implementing paper ballots at the polls, Nye County took the first step in reducing the cost to taxpayers by implementing an all-paper ballot process and eliminating the need to for the excess machine capacity that is a cost to its taxpayers.

Using all paper ballots has distinct advantages over the hybrid method used by many counties.

The paper ballot provides an effective audit trail allowing for ease of recount. Mechanical voting systems produce a paper record of the vote on a paper roll. This makes subsequent recounts difficult. While other methods of printing a hard copy record of the vote exist, they are much more costly than the current printers widely in use throughout the state.

In Nye County, virtually all ballots are counted using the same methodology.

Both mail paper ballots and in person paper ballots are counted using a State approved tabulation method. The only exception is for voters with disabilities that need to use an audio voting method, currently only available with a mechanical voting system.

Voters who prefer to cast their vote in person should be afforded the same methodology of those who chose the universal mail in paper ballot.

Those 6,675 voters who chose to vote in person feel strongly about exercising their right to vote at the polls. Since the voters in this county overwhelmingly support the use of all paper ballots, they should not be denied the ability to vote in the method of their choosing because they wish to exercise that right in person at the polls.

Throughout the history of the State of Nevada, the decision on the method of voting was left to the County Clerk, supported by the Board of County Commissioners.

Current mechanical voting systems purchased in 2017/2018 cost the taxpayers \$430K. That does not include the annual license and warranty fees of over \$40k.

This bill would lock the voters of Nye County into the expensive option of mechanical voting systems.

This will ultimately cost the taxpayers who will have to pay for future mechanical voting system upgrades, particularly since the existing mechanical systems are near the end of their technological life.

The use of mechanical voting systems is a costly methodology in terms of physical equipment, license and warranty fees, and the physical labor and resource to transport voting machines across the vast expanse that is Nye County.

Fiscal Note

This bill forces the taxpayers to pay for the cost of mechanical voting machines that are in excess capacity due to the implementation of universal mail-in ballots. This excess capacity in Nye County is costing taxpayers an additional \$23,000 annually in license and warranty fees for machines that are not needed. Since the machines currently in use were purchased in 2017, they are at the end of the technological life and will need to be replaced. The replacement of the machines just for use at the polls, would cost the taxpayers a minimum of \$217,000 for half the capacity we purchased in 2017 and over \$430,000 to replace the current capacity.

None of this considers the cost to transport the machines to and from the polls in a county such as Nye County that spans 18,199 square miles.