

House Government Operations Committee

January 22, 2025

Bill: 1st substitute HB 69 – Ballot Information Accessibility Amendments

Sponsor: Representative Stephanie Gricius

Floor Sponsor: Senator Calvin R. Musselman

UASD Position: Tracking

This Bill addresses access to, and disclosure of, certain ballot chain of custody information.

Discussion: The sponsor presented a Bill which addresses county clerks' ability to access political information. The 1st substitute includes a new code of conduct for clerks. It clarifies what voter information is considered public or private and what is considered necessary for specific duties. Representative Gricius explained that the substitute resolves limitations in the original Bill by ensuring that counties and candidates can access needed political information while maintaining voter privacy. Line 41 of the substitute highlights what is considered public information. Representative Romero asked if this Bill would impact the vote by mail process. Representative Gricius confirmed that this Bill would not impact any voting methods. Representative Cutler asked whether changes to the use of private information in other proposed legislation would need to be reconciled within this Bill. Representative Gricius discussed that there would simply need to be coordinating clause language added to the Bill.

Brian McKenzie, the Davis County Clerk, spoke in support of the Bill. He is particularly in favor of the code of conduct for clerks implemented within the Bill. There were various citizens who spoke of transparency concerns. Aaron Davidson, the Utah County Clerk and Shelly Jackson, representing the Office of the Lieutenant Governor, spoke from a neutral stance on the Bill. Representative Maloy expressed concerns. He asked Mr. Davidson if clerks or their staff had been improperly handling ballots. He questioned if the new code of conduct is being added because of bad actors. Aaron Davidson asserted that there was a misconstrued perception of how the ballots were handled. That said, the Bill makes the clerk duties and the process to fulfill those duties more clear. Representative Gricius emphasized that all information pulled and utilized by the county clerks must be specifically tied to one of their duties as clerk. This requirement is made clear in the substitute Bill. The 1st substitute was adopted by the committee.

Yeas: 10

Nays: 0

N/V: 3

Outcome: 1st substitute HB 69 passed out of the Committee with a favorable recommendation.