

Honorable Chair & members of the committee, my name is Becky Stockton & I reside in Helena. I have been an election judge for 17 years with half of them as chief judge. I come before you today in opposition to HB 130. I am here today to protect my vote, voters of my precinct & the integrity of the voting process.

Yes, you can confirm that a registered elector resides at that address, but how do you confirm that that elector actually received their ballot?

SOS, Linda McCulloch has stated to the Associated Press on Nov. 3, 2010 that we had a record number of absentee ballots casted in 2010, but on the other hand according to the SOS statistics on voter turnout it was the 3rd lowest since stats have been taken since 1920. The primary also was the third lowest. If mail ballots (absentee) are presumed to increase participation, the facts in the table don't support the theory.

In Article III, Section 4 & 5 of the MT State Constitution it states that "the people may enact laws by initiative or referendum..." #2 of the provision states that in order for an initiative to qualify for the ballot you have to have 5% of the qualified electors in each of at least one-third of the legislative representative districts. The easiest & most productive way to collect qualified electors to sign initiatives or referendums is at the precinct polls on the day of the election. The same applies to Article XIV, Section 2, Initiative for Constitutional Convention. You need 10% of qualified electors. Also in the same article, section 9 for Amendment by Initiative. If you enact this bill, then the process of collecting qualified electors signatures will be much harder & very discouraging for the citizens of Montana to enact their right to change their laws & Constitution by the initiative process guaranteed in our constitution.

On page 24, line 19-23, why are certain electors treated differently than other electors? Why are not all electors on the same playing field? If this is enacted, page 24 line 21-23 the only college campus's that would qualified are MSU & UofM because they have over 10,000 enrolled students going to their campuses.

If this bill is enacted it will extend the campaign season for candidates and each candidate will need more money to influence the voters to vote for him because they have to hit the voters early (before & the day the ballots go out) to get the elector to vote for them. Most citizens of the state of Montana do not want to extend the campaign season.

Do we have certified signature verification experts to analyze every signature to make sure every qualified elector's vote counts? The process at the polls for an ID prevented most fraud. Most of my electors at my precinct show their photo drivers license.

Once it is known that we are a total mail-in-ballot state & it is reported in the press the date the ballots are being mailed; anyone who wants to affect the outcome of the vote could drive around the following day & take the ballots out of the mailboxes. They in turn could destroy the ballot. A lot of people who do not receive a ballot do not follow up to see where their ballot went. If the person who is taking ballots out of the mailboxes knows that you vote a certain political party and they vote the other political party, then taking your ballot will make sure your vote will not count and help the other candidate who is a member of the other political party win.

If, I, an elector am going to be forced to vote by mail, there is no need to apply for an absentee ballot. Section 34, 13-21-210, on page 29 needs to be eliminated.

Are there any provisions for the elector if the elector wants to change their vote because they made a mistake on their ballot? Presently, at the polls a voter can ask for another ballot if the elector has made a mistake on their ballot. Ex. if a candidate drops out of the race before the official close of the election & thousands of ballots have already been casted absentee, can an elector ask the election administrator for a new ballot & vote for another candidate. This happened in the primary in the PSC race in 2010.

On page 24, line 17 – Why do we need to have at least one official drop box that is open 24 hours, 7 days a week? We have never needed in the past to have a precinct or the election office open 24 hours. History shows that an elector does not have a problem going to the polls between 7am-8pm & to the election office between hours of 8 to 5 to cast a ballot, then we do not need a drop box with extended hours. It is a waste and added expense. We do not need to babysit our electors! They need to be responsible!

As to saving money, this is one area we should spend the money in order to protect the vote & the integrity of the voting process. This is definitely not a good place to save money!

I think we need to go back to the original intent of absentee balloting and continue to provide voting at the polls. There has been no history of continuous voter fraud in our state with our present system.

This is such a sudden & complete change of our voting process that I cannot comprehend all the changes right now. Our present voting system works very well without much fraud, so changing the system so drastically without truly knowing if it is going to work is something you should consider. Just remember when making your decision on this bill as legislators read Article IV, Section 3. Make sure **YOU** insure the purity of elections and guard against abuses of the electoral process.

Please vote "NO" on HB 130.

Becky Stockton