

HB 13-1303

04/15/2013

George Welsh – Superintendent, Center School District
Julio Paez – Trustee, Center Colorado Town Board of Trustees

Start Time: 4:53:00

1 Chair: Welcome, more Saguache folks, please introduce yourselves and give us your testimony.

2 George Welsh: I'll start first, my name is George Welsh and I'm Superintendent of schools in

3 Center. I'm a citizen of Center, Saguache County, I've lived in the town limits for the past

4 seventeen years. Um and just so, you Julio has a little bit of a hearing issue and he asked if

5 maybe there were some questions that he didn't catch that I could possibly repeat them to him

6 if that was needed.

7 Chair: Certainly.

8 George Welsh: Want to introduce yourself?

9 Julio Paez: Sure, my name is Julio Paez, I am a town trustee for the town of Center, Colorado

10 and I have been ever since 2008.

11 George Welsh: I'll go ahead and start with my concerns on it. I'm not really coming as

12 Superintendent of schools in Center, and I'm also the immediate past President of the Colorado

13 Association of School Executives, and I'm not testifying on behalf of them. I'm just testifying on

14 behalf of being Joe Citizen in Colorado. My major issue is the concept in this bill that would

15 pretty much require all mail in ballot elections. We recently had a recall election in Center, and I

16 wanted to describe my voting experience for you. I went to the Town Hall. I was identified by a

17 person who had my name on a list. I had to sign to get my ballot. I then went into the safety of

18 a booth where I was able to open up my ballot and check off my votes, make my decision, in
19 the recall election. Close it up and then submit it in a secure fashion in a bin that would then be
20 counted later. I felt like that process was fantastic. Um unfortunately, that's not the process
21 that every person in the town of Center was able to go through. A comparison of experiences
22 that I know happening in our town is if your landlord, the person you work for, if you're a
23 relative of a person who works for a person, or who maybe stays in a particular housing
24 environment – you may be asked to vote while a person is looking over your shoulder, or you
25 are being asked to vote in a situation where you have to then hand the ballot that person and
26 they're going to turn it in. You know I don't know where you guys are coming from, thinking
27 that's it's an improvement to put people, especially the people in least power, into a situation
28 where they have to vote while someone is looking over their shoulder. We hear the story time
29 after time in our little town about what happens in our elections, and sending a ballot to
30 someone requiring them to fill it in that way when everyone who is very interested in which
31 way they vote will be happy to meet them at home and pick that up from them is a pretty
32 unsafe thing to do. I want to give you an example of this. I am actually an elected official,
33 believe it or not, I serve on the Center Sanitation Board. Nobody really cares whose on that
34 obviously if I'm on it. But there are two stark contrasts. We had an election recently in which
35 you had to show up and vote. And a convicted felon in our town who quite often runs for
36 offices received three votes in that environment. And then recently that person ran for another
37 seat in town, that was a school board position, and virtually the same electorate somehow was
38 able to garner one hundred twenty votes and this is an example of what goes on when you put
39 out mail-in ballots. I'm just gonna jump to the end so that Julio has a little bit of time. I heard a

40 lady who is very excited about her gaining her citizenship and saying, being concerned that she
41 might have to wait past the current election to vote. I'm an American citizen since birth and I
42 had to wait eighteen years. I think it's ok, to wait a little bit. I think what you are trying to do is
43 increase participation in elections and a quote I would like to leave you with is participation in
44 elections will increase, not because voting is made easier - but rather it will increase when
45 people feel like their vote counts. And if you vote in a situation in which your vote doesn't
46 count, I don't think you're more apt to cast your vote. And the last thing, and I did send you
47 guys a letter yesterday, but I want to we have this hanging in our classrooms in Center,
48 Colorado, and that says the right thing isn't always easy, and the easy thing isn't always right.
49 And I think if I'm a County Clerk, I like your bill because it'd make my job easier, but it doesn't
50 make it right.

51 Julio Páez: Um as I said before, my name is Julio Páez. I am a County Trustee from the town of
52 Center, Colorado. I have been so since 2008. I'm also a registered Democrat, and have been my
53 entire adult life. I want to speak before you to give you testimony as to why I'm very opposed
54 to this bill, House Bill 1303, which is being considered. During this process we all heard possible
55 negative or dangerous things that could happen if this bill were to pass, even the possibilities of
56 voter fraud. I'm here to tell you that such things are much real and they've been happening in
57 my community of Center, Colorado for decades. Um, the most recent example that I can give
58 you is the recall election that happened in Center, Colorado on March 19th of this year. Before
59 Election Day when mail ballots were sent out there was a lot of unethical activity going on in
60 Center. Various individuals in my community who have been involved and active in local politics
61 for decades, people in positions of power, people with the power to fire other people, uh

62 people with the authority to kick someone out of their home, people with power to retaliate
63 against children of voting parents - engage in unethical and possible illegal activity. They paid a
64 lot of unwelcomed visits to voters at their home. To unduly influence them. They did the same
65 thing to their employees, and they also did the same thing to people who reside in public
66 housing or rentals. When someone is sitting next to you asking to help fill out your mail ballot,
67 you will feel pressured to vote a certain way. Anybody will. But when that someone is your
68 employer or your landlord you will feel even more pressure. When someone tells you that your
69 rent will go up if the election goes a certain way that is very unethical and troubling to me. That
70 result of that election was this people who voted by secret ballot in the polling place in Center,
71 voted "no" for the recall, by large margins, and the mail ballot voters subject sometimes to
72 undue influence voted "yes" for the recall. This is just one example. I can tell you that in
73 another election that I have experienced when I ran for Town Board back in 2008, I witnessed
74 several instances of voter manipulation and intimidation. I felt a presence of hopelessness due
75 to the fact that I didn't have anybody to turn to. Um who oversees these things? I used to ask
76 myself. I quickly found out that there is no law enforcement, no enforcement especially when it
77 comes to municipal elections. Neither local or state law enforcement will get involved. They all
78 say the same thing to me, this is a local issue we cannot get involved. This bill doesn't take into
79 consideration these dangers that I have spoken about. It doesn't take into consideration the
80 people in rural areas. And people who are not financially secure are the most vulnerable to
81 voter intimidation, threats, and fraud. Once everyone gets a mail ballot in their mailbox, in
82 some communities like mine, the bad guys to put it simply will be there to intimidate them. Uh

83 they don't get to say I don't get a mail ballot, I go to the polls. So please I ask you not to pass
84 this bill. Thank you.

End Time: 5:02:35