

House State, Civic, Military, & Veterans Affairs

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HB25-1155 Mod Candidate Authority Watchers Gen Election

Typed Text of Testimony Submitted

Name, Position, Representing	Typed Text of Testimony
Suzanne Taheri For themselves	<p>Thank you for the opportunity to submit my written testimony. I have been a watcher is several recounts over the past 3 years and the appointment process has been problematic. In major even year elections, the statute only allows watchers to be appointed by issue committees or political parties. This makes some sense because if every candidate got to appoint a watcher during a major election many counties could not accommodate the number. The problem comes in recount, where the SoS had stepped in to cut off access and limit appointment authority to county political parties. This was the case in 2022 when I was a watcher in CD3 and the SoS required that we get an appointment from each county party chair person, limited further to only the Democrat or Republican parties.</p> <p>Some of the county parties were not active or I was unable to get in communication with them. My watcher appointments from issue committees and minor parties was rejected. This meant that in some counties, my candidate had no watcher available. In those cases we had to request congressional watchers who cannot be denied access.</p> <p>In response, in 2023 the SoS passed a rule that allowed watchers with state party or issue committee appointments to watch, space permitting. However, in El Paso county in 2024, my issue committee appointment was rejected despite the rule. I then had to obtain a watcher appointment from the state party. In a recount the real parties in interest are the candidates, and some candidates may not even have the backing of the state party. These candidates should be able to choose their watchers aligned with them. The current system creates confusion and an uneven playing field.</p> <p>Confusion exists not just in the appointment itself, but also on the state campaign finance side. If someone is working for a state candidate but cannot be appointed by them, this leads to issues with coordination and reporting.</p> <p>For policy and legal reasons, it makes sense to allow candidates to choose their own watcher in a recount.</p>