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Testimony from:
Dr. Jonathan Madison, Governance Fellow, R Street Institute

In OPPOSITION to HB 300, “AN ACT to amend provisions relating to voting at an election.”

February 4th, 2025

Utah House Government Operations Committee

Chair Burton and Committee Members:

Thank you for considering my testimony today. My name is Dr. Jonathan Madison, and I am a Governance Fellow at the R Street Institute, a nonprofit, nonpartisan public policy research organization dedicated to promoting limited but effective government, including in the area of election administration. This is why HB 300 is of particular concern to us.

Utah is a national example of election administration, with a system that prioritizes both accessibility and security. One of the hallmarks of Utah’s success has been its robust mail-in voting system, which is widely used by Utah voters.¹ This system has been shown to be both safe and effective.² Attempts to roll back mail-in voting would needlessly undermine a system that Utahns widely use and trust.³

Furthermore, mail-in voting has demonstrably increased voter participation.⁴ Studies consistently show that states with accessible mail-in voting options see higher turnout.⁵ Utah has been no exception—vote-by-mail has made it easier for eligible voters to participate without unnecessary barriers. Given the state’s strong track record of secure elections, restricting this option would be a step backward.

It is also important to recognize that Utah voters overwhelmingly make use of their mail-in ballots. Efforts to restrict this trusted system run counter to the expressed preferences of Utahns and risk

¹ Emily Anderson Stern, “Nearly All Utah Voters Use Mail-in Ballots. Here’s How We Know,” *The Salt Lake Tribune*, September 24, 2024, <https://www.sltrib.com/news/politics/2024/09/24/utah-voters-have-embraced-mail-in/>.

² Deseret News Editorial Board, “Don’t ‘Fix’ a Utah Election System That Isn’t Broken,” *Deseret News*, November 20, 2024, <https://www.deseret.com/opinion/2024/11/20/keep-utahs-vote-by-mail-system/>.

³ Brigham Tomco, “Vast Majority of Utahns Trust Vote by Mail, Poll Finds,” *Deseret News*, October 28, 2024, <https://www.deseret.com/politics/2024/10/28/utah-poll-on-election-confidence-with-mail-in-voting/>.

⁴ Deseret News Editorial Board, “Don’t ‘Fix’ a Utah Election System That Isn’t Broken,” *Deseret News*, November 20, 2024, <https://www.deseret.com/opinion/2024/11/20/keep-utahs-vote-by-mail-system/>.

⁵ Jonathan Madison, “Nevada and the Move Away from Election Day,” R Street Institute, November 18, 2024, <https://www.rstreet.org/commentary/nevada-and-the-move-away-from-election-day/>.



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decreasing participation in future elections. In recent polling from the Sutherland Institute, a majority of Utahns expressed that requiring them to return their ballot in person would decrease their confidence in election results.⁶

The bottom line is that Utah has set an example for the nation in effective election administration, and HB 300 would needlessly undo that progress. Reforms to make the counting of mailed-in ballots more efficient and ensure the ID of voters are welcome, however, this can be accomplished without prohibiting the return of ballots via the postal system and drop boxes. Restricting mail-in voting in this fashion would make voting harder for many Utahns. For these reasons, we urge the committee to reject HB 300.

Thank you for your time,

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⁶ Derek Monson, "Election Reform and Public Trust: What Utah Voters Think about Proposed Election Reforms," Sutherland Institute, January 2025, <https://sutherlandinstitute.org/publications/election-reform-and-public-trust/>.