Sadly, lawmakers have proposed to make voting more difficult, after unprecedented voter success in 2020 – during a global pandemic. More than 1.7 million Iowans voted in the 2020 election, breaking the state’s voting record, with almost 76% of registered voters casting a ballot. More than a million Iowans cast votes early in-person or by mail to maintain social distancing and to avoid lines at the polls.

Logically, the Secretary of State’s office and county Auditors should work together to avoid duplicating efforts and unnecessary costs to taxpayers.

The proposed bills, HF590 (and SF413), shrinks Iowa's early voting period from 29 days to 18. Shortening voting time is counterproductive. Whoever said reducing the voting time will shorten campaigns is wrong: candidates won’t stop campaigning until the polls close on Election Day.

County auditors should be able to send absentee ballots to voters who request them by phone or by mail. These election officials are best suited to determine their county’s satellite voting locations. A petition is an unnecessary administrative step requiring needless work and an unnecessary cost.

Casting ballots earlier helps county auditors organize staff to get vote counts completed when the polls close. Close all the polls at 8 p.m. but don’t shorten the time allowed to vote early.

Why change the current law from a voter designate to deliver an absentee ballot to one that limits who can return a voter's absentee ballot. This is unnecessarily restrictive for older voters who do not drive or live near an immediate family member, household member or caregiver who would be able to do so. Charging someone with a misdemeanor for delivering a ballot is unnecessarily restrictive.

Is it really necessary to mark a voter inactive after only one election? Voters who return to the polls to vote should not be punished for inactivity for whatever reason.

Also, county auditors are best suited to determine where ballot drop boxes should be placed in their counties – especially counties with larger populations.

Iowans are fortunate, the incidence of voter fraud in our state is nearly nonexistent. The best governance is the one closest to home. Stripping county auditors of their authority will limit their abilities to run efficient elections. Better communication between the Secretary of State, county auditors and local election officials is needed to run efficient elections, not criminal charges.

Linda Schreiber
Johnson County voter