

Legislative Testimony

In **Opposition** to House Bill 2453
House Committee on Elections
February 3, 2026

Written-only Testimony

Chair Proctor and Members of the Committee,

My name is Logan DeMond, and I am the Director of Policy and Research at the American Civil Liberties Union of Kansas. The ACLU of Kansas is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization with more than 35,000 supporters statewide that works to protect and strengthen the civil rights and liberties of all Kansans. On behalf of the ACLU of Kansas, I am writing to express our opposition House Bill 2453, which makes significant changes to important voting deadlines and procedures, risking confusion and disenfranchisement. This bill combines a harmful proposal that would limit early voting opportunities with limited attempts at addressing real pitfalls in Kansas election law.

Shortening Advanced Voting Opportunities

HB 2453 shortens the length of time for early voting in-person. Currently, early in-person voting can begin 20 days prior to an election and must conclude by noon the Monday before an election. HB 2453 would require that early voting opportunities conclude the Sunday before an election, eliminating four hours of early voting in several counties across Kansas—including Johnson and Sedgwick, the largest counties in Kansas—without adding any additional days on the front end.

If all counties were to maximize the current early voting period, an additional 20,803 Kansans could cast their ballot. Rather than taking advantage of this additional time and taking steps to increase turnout, this bill rolls back the amount of time, ending early voting the Sunday before the election. HB 2453 erects yet another barrier to accessible elections and brings us one step closer to eliminating early, in-person voting altogether. While the above provisions are harmful and will diminish voter turnout, there are a few provisions in this bill that seek to address real pitfalls within existing election law. Combining these provisions forces legislators to choose between disenfranchising voters and addressing real concerns or ignoring these problems altogether.

Requests for Advanced Ballots

The ACLU of Kansas opposes any additional barriers to voting, and HB 2453 requires that requests for advanced ballots be submitted on the fourteenth day prior to the election rather than the Tuesday before, which is required under existing law. With last year's repeal of the three-day mail processing window for advance ballots, this change does signal to voters that they should not expect to receive, complete, and return their ballot by mail in under one week.

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In Kansas, tens of thousands of voters rely on mail ballots, and in the 2024 General Election, more than 120,000 Kansans voted by mail (*Kansas City Star*). Voting by mail is a convenient, safe alternative for the thousands of voters who face barriers to voting in-person, such as elderly voters, disabled voters, students attending school out-of-state, and minorities. The realities of voting by mail should be clearly communicated to voters who wish to do so. However, if this committee wishes to seriously address this issue, a better alternative would be to reinstate the three-day mail processing window—not include a fix to a self-created problem with otherwise harmful legislation that limits early voting opportunities.

Extending Registration Deadlines

While the ACLU of Kansas opposes this bill, we appreciate the two additional days to register voters. Oftentimes, potential voters tune in to elections at the last minute. Registration deadlines are artificial and many states now have eliminated voter registration deadlines entirely, allowing same-day voter registration. Research consistently shows that participation by eligible citizens increases when the registration window is as long as possible, with the highest turnout in states with same-day voter registration. We strongly support any change that provides eligible people more time to opt into participation. Additionally, it's important to note that this positive step should be met with expanded early voting opportunities.

Extending the Window to Mail Advanced Ballots

We also appreciate the two additional days for advanced ballots to be mailed out by county election officials. Following the 2025 passage of Senate Bill 4, which repealed the three-day mail processing window, Kansas voters will face even an even shorter window to submit their ballot to be counted. Currently, at just 20 days, Kansas is home to the shortest window in the United States for election officials to mail out ballots and for voters to receive and return them (NCSL). With this change, Kansas will remain one of three states with the shortest windows; however, such a move is a step in the right direction. This additional time is not a luxury, but a necessity.

Conclusion

Overall, the concerns with HB 2453 outweigh its benefits, which is why we encourage the members of this committee to oppose it and, instead, consider each of the bill's provisions individually. By lumping together various proposals and making changes in a critical, even-numbered election year, these actions risk creating confusion, disenfranchising voters, undermining the right to vote, and reducing voter turnout.

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References

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