

TESTIMONY OF CALEB SMITH (WRITTEN AND ORAL-VIRTUAL)
INCLUSIVE CAMPAIGN DIRECTOR
KANSAS APPLESEED CENTER FOR LAW AND JUSTICE
316-461-9655 | CSMITH@KANSASAPPLESEED.ORG

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SENATE COMMITTEE ON FEDERAL AND STATE AFFAIRS
IN OPPOSITION TO SB 445
FEBRUARY 17, 2022

Members of the Senate Committee on Federal and State Affairs:

My name is Caleb Smith; I am a Campaign Director for Kansas Appleseed Center for Law and Justice, a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to the belief that Kansans, working together, can build a state full of thriving, inclusive, and just communities.

Kansas Appleseed opposes SB 445.

The research is clear: when more people vote, communities thrive. Higher voter turnout results in more resources, better physical and mental health, more access to comprehensive health care, more secure housing, more nutritious food, better quality education, more jobs with livable wages, less crime, and lower measures of discrimination.^{1 2}

Advance ballots make it easier for more people to exercise their right to vote. They help address the effects of potential Election Day obstacles like bad weather, long lines at polling places, or the inability to take time off from work. The use of secure ballot drop boxes is demonstrated to improve voter turnout - one recent study showed they can increase turnout by as much as 7%.³

During a public health crisis, such as the current coronavirus pandemic, advance ballots also can make it easier to vote safely. This is especially true if advance ballots can be returned by the use of secure ballot collection boxes that eliminate the need for in person contact.

Current Kansas law requires advance ballots received by mail to be “mailed or otherwise transmitted to the county election officer” in a signed and sealed envelope.⁴ Advance ballots

¹ Yagoda, N. “Addressing Health Disparities Through Voter Engagement.” *Annals of Family Medicine*. 2019. <https://www.annfammed.org/content/17/5/459.long>

² Abramovita, M. et.al. “Voting Is Social Work.” *Journal of Social Work Education* (2019). <https://doi.org/10.1080/10437797.2019.1656690>

³ Collingwood, L., et. al. “Do Drop Boxes Improve Voter Turnout?” *Election Law Journal* (2018). <https://www.liebertpub.com/doi/pdfplus/10.1089/elj.2017.0450>

⁴ K.S.A. 25-1124 (a).

received in person at a county election office or satellite advance voting site may be deposited in a locked ballot box without an envelope at that office or site.⁵

This bill attempts to make it so that the only type of ballot drop box that could be used is the locked ballot box at the county election office or satellite advance voting site for voters receiving their advance ballot in person at that site. Furthermore it would require that this locked ballot box be inside a building and “continuously observed by an employee of the county election office during those times when such ballot box is accessible by the general public.”

Requiring counties to have a dedicated employee continuously watching a locked ballot box is an enormous waste of money that could potentially make elections less secure. Forcing counties to use their election office employees in this way would prevent them from doing other tasks to monitor and administer elections.

The use of a locked ballot drop box is a secure method of improving access to voting. There is not a single documented incident of voter fraud using ballot drop boxes in Kansas.⁶ Access to ballot drop boxes improves voter turnout and allows for safer voting. This bill would make it harder for people to vote and could potentially compromise election integrity by unnecessarily diverting election office resources.

For all these reasons, Kansas Appleseed opposes SB 445.

⁵ Id.

⁶ The Heritage Foundation. “Election Fraud Cases.” <https://www.heritage.org/voterfraud/search?state=KS>