

February 16, 2022

Written Testimony to Senate Committee on Federal & State Affairs

NAME: Kate Kemper

TITLE: Douglas County, Kansas Citizen

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CITY: Lawrence

BILL NUMBER: SB 445

BILL DESCRIPTION: Prohibiting the use of additional ballot boxes for the return of advance voting ballots.

PROPONENT, OPPONENT, or NEUTRAL: Opponent

Dear committee members,

I am writing to voice my opposition to bill SB 445. As written, the bill notes that the only ballot boxes approved for use are those located inside the county election office or satellite voting site. Based on my experience using ballot boxes in the past, these changes effectively eliminate the convenience associated with using a ballot box in the first place. As I noted in my testimony opposing SB 388, I have used a ballot drop box when voting in every election since I became a Kansas resident for a number of reasons- accessibility, convenience, and safety:

Accessibility: Once I receive my advance ballot in the mail, I research candidates and ballot initiatives, and fill out by ballot, I drop it off in the ballot drop box outside of the Douglas County Courthouse while running errands or driving home from work.

Convenience: Since the drop box I use is outside of the County Courthouse, I don't need to worry about stopping by during typical building hours. I can drive right up to the drop box and deliver my ballot without getting out of my car. If the ballot box were to be moved inside the building, the time during which I would be able to visit would be limited to building hours, during which I am also working.

Safety: By using a ballot drop box, I don't have to interact with a single person and risk exposure to COVID-19. If the ballot box were to be moved inside the building, that increases my risk of exposure.

Currently, there are three secure ballot drop box locations listed on the Douglas County Government website. According to the site, all boxes are checked twice per day by non-partisan board of election officials when they are in use. I have trust in my local election officials and am confident that they are successfully ensuring voting security to the best of their ability.

My testimony doesn't even begin to discuss that this policy change would have on community members that do not live close enough to the existing ballot boxes to use them conveniently.

College students, for example, greatly benefit from ballot boxes located on campus as they do not need to find a ride or navigate the public transit system to drop off their ballot. If SB 394 passes (and I really hope it doesn't), the timeline for returning ballots by mail will shorten, potentially prompting more individuals to use ballot boxes. If these boxes are made inaccessible based on location, a significant portion of the population will have a more difficult time fulfilling their civic duty. Is that the intention of this bill?

I ask that you oppose bill SB 445 to ensure that community members are provided the flexibility in order to participate in this civic duty.

Thank you for your consideration,

Kate Kemper