

# ACLU

Kansas

# POLICY PRIORITIES 2025-2026





# Voting Rights

Free and fair elections are the bedrock of our democracy, but decades of anti-democracy attacks have made voting more difficult for everyday people. The ACLU of Kansas is committed to advancing reforms that expand voting opportunities for all eligible Kansans—in our courts, legislature, and communities. We invite you and your community to join us in the ongoing work to defend and build a stronger democracy.

**Expand Availability of Translated Materials (L)** – Federal law requires counties to provide translated election materials if 5% of citizens of the voting age population have limited English proficiency. In Kansas, that means only Finney, Ford, Grant, Seward, and Haskell counties have materials in Spanish. But federal law should be the floor, not the ceiling. Counties that don't meet the federal threshold can still make it easier for eligible voters by providing election materials in their primary language, such as voter registration forms and instructions, polling place information, general information about election dates in local communities, ballot instructions, and information about the right to receive language assistance at the polls (*which is mandated by federal law*).

**Enhance Early Voting (L/S)** – Early voting has a clear connection to voter participation. Here are a few simple ways your county election office could, under its current discretion, expand early voting access.

- Increase Early Voting Hours
- Establish Multiple Early Voting Locations
- Send Advanced Mail Ballot Applications to All Voters

**Ensure Accessibility and Equity (L)** – Your ability to vote shouldn't depend on your neighborhood or physical ability, but for many eligible Kansas voters, there are significant barriers that make it harder for them to cast their ballot. Here are several ways your county election office can meet the needs of voters from all backgrounds.

- Implement Curbside Voting
- Increase the Number of Election Day Polling Locations in Geographically Diverse Jurisdictions
- Expand Translated Resources by Implementing the Recommendations Above

\* **L = Local, S = State**



# Criminal Legal Reform

Increasingly harsh criminal justice policies over the last three decades in Kansas have resulted in a system that embodies over-criminalization, mass incarceration, and racial injustice. At the ACLU of Kansas, we're focused on putting an end to racially motivated or disparate policing and sentencing, increasing government accountability and transparency, and reversing excessive incarceration by:

## **Eliminate the Two-Tiered System of Justice (L/S)**

– Our pre-trial detention system punishes people for their poverty by holding them in jail for prolonged periods before they are even convicted of a crime, subjecting families and communities to the harms of incarceration. The cash bail system creates a two-tiered justice system between those who can pay for their freedom, and those who can't. It keeps poor people in jail, while wealthier people accused of the exact same crime can buy their freedom.

**Decriminalize Medical Marijuana (S)** - Our state's antiquated and punitive marijuana laws can and have ruined the lives of many Kansans, disproportionately impacting Black Kansans, who are 3.64 times more likely to be arrested for marijuana possession than a white Kansan, despite similar rates of use. By regulating and encouraging a responsible and sustainable marijuana industry, we can raise millions of dollars of revenue for essential services like roads, schools, and safety – while creating new opportunities for farmers. We can also save the wasted tax dollars we currently spend on policing marijuana arrests, adjudicating possession cases, and incarcerating possession.

## **Eliminate Fines and Fees in Juvenile Courts (S)** -

Fines and fees serve no rehabilitative purpose. Instead, they work to punish people for their poverty, disproportionately affect Black youth, and increase recidivism – all while costing more systemic resources to enforce than they're ultimately worth. There are many more effective, evidence-based ways to hold young offenders accountable for breaking the law, from probation and community service to drug and alcohol counseling and anger management classes.

A vertical orange banner on the left side of the page features a silhouette of the Statue of Liberty. The text 'Firewall for Freedom' is written vertically in large, white, sans-serif font across the banner.

# Firewall for Freedom

The Trump administration has tested every limit, abused every power, and exploited every loophole to silence dissent, disenfranchise marginalized communities, and erode our rule of law. These are deliberate tactics designed to enforce compliance through fear, force, and censorship. But we aren't backing down. If the Trump administration wants to go after people's rights and freedoms, they'll have to go through Kansas first. During this second Trump Administration, here's some of our top policy recommendations:

**Protect Communities from Immigration Raids and Deportations (L/S)** - Issue guidance to state and local law enforcement prohibiting cooperation with ICE or 287(g) agreements, a set of agreements that deputize local officers to perform immigration enforcement functions, primarily in jails.

**Construct a Firewall Against Civil Rights Violations (L/S)** - Issue guidance and/or instructions to county and state employees to construct a firewall against the use of state resources for Trump administration anti-civil rights criminal prosecutions and enforcement measures -- combining concepts underlying so-called shield laws and sanctuary measures to protect immigrants, abortion access, access to gender-affirming care and First Amendment-protected rights.

**Protect Protest and Dissent (L/S)** - Issue guidance to state and local police departments about policing protests in ways that uphold the right to peaceable protest and dissent.

**Ensure Self-Reporting of Gender (L/S)** - Ensure gender is always self-reported in Kansas, with no medical documentation requirements, and pledge to refuse to investigate individual's sex assigned at birth.



### **Affirm Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)**

**Programs (L/S)** - Enact and expand DEI programs across state and local agencies, incorporate DEI goals into economic tools and policies, and defend against attacks on DEI from state and local officials and the Trump administration's interpretation and enforcement of federal law or withholding of federal funds for alleged noncompliance with executive orders.

**Limit Police Contacts (L/S)** - Reduce the population of people vulnerable to police contracts under a Trump administration by repealing low-level offenses that do not impact public safety and/or create a risk of unconstitutional policing (traffic, poverty, houselessness, substance use, mental illness, abortion, protest, sex work, immigration etc.)

The American Civil Liberties Union of Kansas is a non-profit organization dedicated to protecting the civil rights and liberties of all people living in Kansas. We work in the state legislature, the courts, and local communities to ensure that those who threaten the civil liberties of Kansans are met with stark resistance. We work for policy change to expand and strengthen civil liberties, provide legal counsel, and act as an ally and an advocate for people who are denied the rights guaranteed to them by the U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights.

It is our mission to protect and defend the constitutional rights and civil liberties of every individual in Kansas regardless of creed, race, religion, gender identification, or class. Our efforts are focused on serving and defending reproductive rights, racial justice, LGBTQ+ rights, First Amendment rights, immigrant rights, voting rights, criminal justice reform, and privacy rights.

The ACLU of Kansas protects the civil rights of segments of our population that have traditionally been marginalized, including women, people of color, lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, transgender and queer, people, currently and formerly incarcerated people, people with disabilities, immigrants, and the poor. We defend the freedoms of all residents of Kansas without consideration of political partisanship.

**As an elected or appointed official, if you have questions about the ACLU of Kansas, our policy work, or have questions about the impacts of local, state, or federal policy, contact our Policy Department at [ldemond@aclukansas.org](mailto:ldemond@aclukansas.org).**

