

Legislative Testimony

In Opposition to House Bill 2503
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 guaranteed by the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of the State of Kansas, including the fundamental right to vote. On behalf of the ACLU of Kansas, I am writing in opposition to House Bill 2503, which would provide for the repeal of the Mail Ballot Election Act, disenfranchising vulnerable voters, undermining confidence in voting by mail, and complicating election administration. I urge this committee to reject any effort that would limit Kansans' access to secure, accessible, and reliable voting options, no matter the size and scope of the election.

Growing Use of Mail-In Voting in Kansas and Across the Country

Voting by mail is a critical method of participation that millions of Americans rely on and increasingly choose with every election cycle. In Kansas, tens of thousands of voters rely on mail ballots. In the 2024 General Election, more than 120,000 Kansans voted by mail (*Kansas City Star*).

In the same election, nearly one in three Americans—roughly 31 percent—lawfully cast their ballots by mail, which amounted to more than 48 million mail-in votes. This included voters of all ages and races, from urban to rural communities (States United Democracy Center, 2025). During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, mail-in voting accounted for roughly 43 percent of total turnout. The share of the electorate voting by mail in 2024 remained significantly above pre-pandemic levels, and higher than comparable elections in the past decade (U.S. Election Assistance Commission, 2025). Long-term data shows this is not an isolated spike; the number and share of ballots cast by mail have grown steadily over multiple election cycles, reflecting voter preference for convenient and safe alternatives to in-person voting (USAfacts, 2025). If this committee wishes to increase accessibility and turnout in local elections, eliminating mail-in voting would only drive down turnout in low-turnout elections.

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This is not a partisan issue, but one rooted in accessibility and voter choice. Removing this option will not only silence these voices but also reverse a clear, stable trend in how Americans choose to participate in our elections, further driving down turnout in important local decisions.

Disenfranchising Vulnerable Voters

Mail-in voting is not a convenience for a select few, it is a lifeline for thousands of Kansans who would otherwise face significant barriers to participation. Elderly voters often rely on mail ballots due to limited mobility, chronic health conditions, or lack of transportation. Many seniors are no longer able to stand in line or travel long distances to polling locations. Repealing this law would force them to choose between their health and their right to vote on issues directly facing their communities.

Voters with disabilities also disproportionately rely on mail-in ballots. For many Kansans with physical, cognitive, or medical limitations, in-person voting can be inaccessible or unsafe. Voting by mail allows these individuals to participate independently and with dignity. Eliminating this option would place unnecessary and discriminatory burdens on their civic participation, especially as it relates to decisions made at the local level, which are often most impactful.

Out-of-state college students would also be directly harmed. Many Kansas residents attend school outside the state but remain eligible to vote in Kansas. Mail-in ballots allow these young voters to remain engaged in their home communities. Repeal would effectively silence many of these voices and discourage young voters from getting involved at the local level. This demographic is one of the least represented at the polls in off-year and local elections, and such an action would only serve to drive down turnout.

Minority communities are also more likely to be impacted by voting restrictions. Communities of color are more likely to face transportation barriers, inflexible work schedules, limited access to polling sites, and language obstacles. Mail-in voting helps reduce these inequities. Removing it would deepen existing disparities in political participation and effectively eliminate the voices of minority communities in important local elections.

Undermining Election Security and Confidence

Mail-in voting in Kansas has a long record of security and reliability. Existing safeguards, such as signature verification, voter registration checks, and tracking systems protect against fraud. There is no evidence that mail voting has compromised election integrity in our state.

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Repealing this law would not make elections more secure. Rather, it would create confusion, disrupt established systems, and undermine voter confidence in all elections. Changing voting rules risks discouraging participation and eroding trust in election administration in off-year and even-year elections, further perpetuating the myth that voting by mail is not safe and secure. Repealing the Mail Ballot Election Act would chip away at confidence in mail-in voting and bring us one step closer to its demise altogether.

Administrative and Financial Consequences

Eliminating mail-in voting would place significant strain on local election officials. As is written in the fiscal note, election officials would require additional training to ensure they are in compliance with these changes. The procedural changes required of them for filing and shifting from various mailing options to in-person voting only cannot be estimated, leaving lawmakers to make an important decision regarding election administration without any idea of what it will cost their communities. Such a change would be an unfunded mandate that would only complicate election administration.

Conclusion

The right to vote is fundamental to our democracy, and it is the foundation upon which all other rights rest. Policies that restrict access to the ballot undermine not only individual participation but also public trust in our democratic institutions. Repealing the Mail Ballot Act, which expanded access to voting and strengthened civic participation across Kansas, would do exactly that. The ability to vote by mail has helped ensure that elderly voters, disabled Kansans, students, rural residents, and working families can all participate in our democracy at every level of government and in every important decision sent to the voters. Its repeal sends the message that some voices matter less than others in decisions impacting our everyday lives, and that participation should be limited rather than encouraged, while placing additional burdens on election administrators. A healthy democracy depends on broad participation, and our goal should be to remove barriers, not create new ones.

On behalf of the ACLU of Kansas, I urge this committee to oppose HB 2503 and the repeal of the Mail Ballot Act, which upholds the fundamental right to vote. Kansas voters deserve fair, accessible, and inclusive elections at every level.

Logan DeMond
Director of Policy and Research

www.aclukansas.org
913-490-4100
Post Office Box 13048
Overland Park, KS 66282



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