

Legislative Testimony

In **Opposition** to **HB2512**
House Committee on Elections
January 25, 2024

| WRITTEN ONLY |

Dear Chairman Proctor and Members of the Committee,

My name is Rashane Hamby and I am the Director of Policy and Research at the American Civil Liberties Union of Kansas, a nonpartisan, non-profit organization with more than 35,000 supporters across Kansas that works to preserve and strengthen the civil rights and liberties of every person in our state. I am writing to express our strong opposition to the proposed changes in the advance voting ballot system as outlined in HB2512, which mandates that advance ballots cast in person must be received by 7:00 p.m. on the second day preceding the election.

We believe that the proposed language within HB2512 significantly undermines the foundational principles of our democracy in the following ways:

Limits Accessibility

The current advance voting system in Kansas, as in many parts of the country, has been instrumental in reducing administrative pressures on Election Day. It has been an important tool for broadening the scope of voter participation. By allowing voters to submit their ballots up to the day before an election, we have accommodated those with challenging schedules, mobility issues, or other impediments that might prevent them from voting on Election Day. *This flexibility is not just a convenience; it is a crucial aspect of ensuring that all voices are heard in our democratic process.*

Restricts Inclusivity in voting

The proposed change, however, would strip away these vital hours of early voting and erect a new barrier to participation. It would result in the loss of half a day on Monday, a critical time currently available to voters for in-person ballot submission. This is not a trivial reduction; it is a significant barrier that could discourage or outright prevent many from casting their vote. The impact of this change would be unevenly felt, disproportionately affecting those who cannot afford to adjust their schedules, such as hourly workers, parents, and the elderly.

Moreover, by granting county election offices the discretion to decide their operational hours over the weekend preceding Election Day, the bill injects even more uncertainty and inconsistency into the voting process. This discretion could lead to varied practices across counties, enhancing the already a patchwork nature of election rules, which can confuse voters and further hinder their ability to participate in elections.

Furthermore, the stipulation that voters applying for an advance voting ballot by mail must furnish identification with their application, coupled with the introduction of stringent rules about specific type fonts, is excessively burdensome. The end result is again to create barriers to participation, to reduce voter turnout, and to weaken our democracy. Adding to this, the classification of certain violations as misdemeanors, complete with penalties, is an overreach that seems particularly excessive.

For the reasons listed above, we urge you to vote no on HB2512.

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