



January 31, 2018

An Open Letter to Kansas's New Governor

Gov. Jeff Colyer
Kansas State Capitol
300 SW 10th Street
Topeka, KS 66612

Dear Gov. Colyer:

On behalf of more than 40,000 ACLU supporters across Kansas, congratulations on your inauguration as the state's 47th governor. The ACLU of Kansas is a non-partisan, non-political membership organization dedicated to preserving and strengthening the constitutional liberties afforded to every resident of Kansas. The ACLU of Kansas and its supporters around Kansas look forward to the opportunity of working with you to preserve and strengthen constitutional rights and freedoms, and to ensure that Kansas truly is "the Free State."

As your administration sets its priorities and establishes "a new tone" in Topeka, we encourage you to take steps to actively defend the values of freedom, justice, and equality that we share as Americans. On a number of issues currently confronting the state, you can play a critical role in ensuring that our shared values are defended. We encourage you to:

- **Continue support for criminal justice reform.** Former Governor Sam Brownback supported criminal justice reform, signing into law several important measures that will reduce mass incarceration, working to improve conditions in correctional facilities, and promoting programs to ensure successful reentry for citizens returning to communities after incarceration.

We hope that your administration continues supporting these initiatives, but there is more that can be done. In particular, we strongly encourage you to lead on integrating formerly incarcerated people into the workforce. Sixteen states have already taken action on precluding state agencies from asking job applicants about their criminal history unless the information is directly relevant, recognizing that it strengthens communities and provides individuals with another chance to be thriving members of the community.

- **Support increased citizen participation in elections.** Kansas currently suffers from low levels of citizen participation in elections because of policies that actively discourage that participation. A bi-partisan group of legislators has introduced the Free State Elections Act (HB 2538 and SB 326), a bill whose provisions—like expanding early voting, withdrawing Kansas from the problem-ridden Crosscheck system, doing away with Kansas's anomalous laws on voter registration, and enacting Election Day registration—

would dramatically increase the level of citizen participation. No citizen should have to choose between going to work and casting a ballot. The bill is supported by a broad spectrum of civic organizations, and we ask that you take a position, publicly supporting the Free State Elections Act.

- **Declare that Kansas is a safe and welcoming place, including for Dreamers.** Kansas is home to tens of thousands of immigrants, who make significant contributions to the state's economy, culture, and quality of life. Despite the amazing contributions that they make, many immigrants currently live in fear due to government policies that target them and because of the creation of a hostile climate. No person—and especially no child—in this country should have to live in fear like that. As governor, you could play an important role in reducing that terror, by declaring that the Kansas Highway Patrol will not take on responsibility for routine, front-line immigration enforcement, and by announcing support for the passage of a clean DREAM Act at the federal level. Taking these positions will strengthen job creation and the economy in Kansas, while remaining true to the state's tradition and values of being a warm, welcoming, and hospitable place.

There are many other issues of civil liberties and civil rights that will emerge over the next year, where the leadership you demonstrate will make the difference. We stand ready to assist your administration in any way that we can, in defense of civil liberties and civil rights. If there is ever anything that we can do to be of assistance, please do not hesitate to call on us.

Again, congratulations on your inauguration as Kansas's governor, and we hope to work together to defend freedom in Kansas.

Sincerely,



Micah W. Kubic
Executive Director