

November 7, 2018

Laura Kelly
Governor-Elect
State of Kansas

Dear Gov.-Elect Kelly:

On behalf of more than 40,000 ACLU supporters across the state of Kansas, congratulations on your victory in the 2018 gubernatorial election.

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, and we look forward to working with you to proactively uphold Kansans' constitutional rights and freedoms.

We were heartened by the high levels of participation in this election by citizens. Voter turnout reached historic highs. This clearly demonstrates that when unconstitutional, illegal barriers to participation are removed—as they have been in Kansas since June—eligible citizens *want to and do* participate in democracy.

As your administration sets its priorities and direction for Kansas, we encourage you to take steps to actively defend the values of freedom, justice, and equality that we share as Americans. We encourage you to:

- **Actively promote increased citizen participation in elections.** Kansas is one of ten states in the country where it's hardest for eligible voters to participate in their democracy. This election demonstrated too well the many barriers to voting that exist across the state. Kansas currently suffers from low levels of citizen participation in elections because of policies that actively discourage that participation. We hope that you will continue your long-standing commitment to reform, including by supporting bipartisan legislation that enacts Election Day registration, expands early voting, withdraws Kansas from the problem-ridden Crosscheck system, and cuts back on restrictive voter registration laws. These policies would dramatically increase the level of citizen participation and strengthen our democracy.
- **Expand criminal justice reform.** Former Governor Sam Brownback signed into law some important measures to reduce mass incarceration, improve conditions in correctional facilities, and promote programs to ensure successful reentry for citizens returning to communities after incarceration. Current Governor Jeff Colyer signed an executive order to "ban the box," a measure that compensates wrongfully incarcerated individuals, and a bill on civil asset forfeiture requiring Kansas law enforcement to report any private property seized and give property owners a day in court. We hope your administration will support reform-minded initiatives while pursuing more ways to reduce mass incarceration, to improve the re-integration of formerly incarcerated people into the workforce,



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and to increase transparency and accountability at all levels of the criminal justice system.

- **Declare Kansas a safe and welcoming place.** Our state 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.

On these and many other issues of civil liberties confronting the state, you play a critical role. We promise to be vigilant in defense of these priorities, and other civil rights and civil liberties issues that emerge. We also stand ready to assist your administration in defense of civil liberties and civil rights when such opportunities arise.

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

Sincerely,

ACLU of Kansas