

RECLAIMING OUR VOTE, RESTORING OUR **DEMOCRACY**

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 this fight for more access and a stronger democracy.

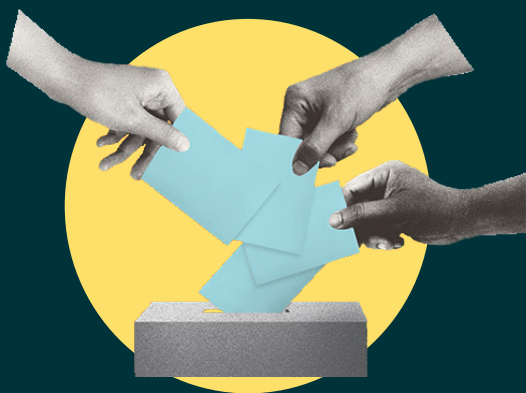
While the Kansas legislature makes the laws for elections across the state, your local election officials have the authority to implement any one of the reforms proposed in this booklet to protect the right to vote and increase turnout — and they answer to you.

Your local election officials have the authority to implement these reforms to protect the right to vote — and **they answer to you.**

This explainer booklet will prepare you to partner with your local election officials to protect the right to vote in your community.

As a Kansan and a voter, you have the power to call on them

to adopt these common sense solutions for democracy in your community.



SOLUTION #1: EXPAND EARLY VOTING

Early voting has a clear connection to voter participation. In 2018, the 60 Kansas counties with the longest early voting periods had the highest turnout.¹ Here are a few, simple ways your county election office could expand early voting access.

Increase Early Voting Hours

Across Kansas, early in-person voting can begin 20 days before Election Day—but local elections officials decide how much of that 20-day period to take advantage of, and not every county maximizes access for its voters. You can increase access in your community by expanding early voting hours to include:

- The full 20 days before Election Day
- Weekends
- Hours outside of 8am to 5pm to allow shift workers, busy parents, and others to take advantage of early voting

Early voting is a benefit for poll workers, too: more people voting early means less stress and workload on Election Day.



Establish Multiple Early Voting Locations

When voting on Election Day, Kansans are assigned to specific polling places based on the address they used to register to vote, ideally limiting the amount of travel required. But if a community only has one early voting location, voters may have to travel a considerable distance to cast their ballot early, which undermines the convenience of voting early in the first place. Election officials can improve opportunities to vote by simply making multiple early voting locations in diverse geographical areas.

Send Early Voting Applications to all Voters

Voting by mail is a convenient and low stress process, but many Kansans don't take advantage of this early voting opportunity.

Sending applications for early voting to every voter is a common sense, tried-and-true way to boost turnout.

SOLUTION #2: ENSURE ACCESSIBILITY AND EQUITY

Your ability to vote shouldn't depend on your neighborhood or physical ability—but for many eligible Kansas voters, there are significant physical barriers for them to get to a poll or cast a ballot. Here are several commonsense ways your county election office can ensure accessibility and equity and meet the needs of voters from all backgrounds.

Implement Curbside Voting

Kansas law allows for people with disabilities to vote curbside—a vital service for people with mobility issues and health concerns. Unfortunately, a 2018 report by the ACLU of Kansas found that only one county discussed curbside voting in their training materials for poll workers. While more polling locations may have increased access to this service during the COVID-19 pandemic, there is significant room for improvement. During the 2022 primary election, the Election Protection voter assistance hotline received numerous calls about polling locations lacking this service. As a community member, you can urge your election officials to implement specific training for poll workers on how curbside voting can be implemented and make efforts to publicize the availability of curbside voting for people with disabilities, including with signage and call button systems.

Increase the Number of Election Day Polling Locations in Geographically Diverse Jurisdictions

Increasing the number of available polling locations will cut down on travel and wait time for voters. Making sure those locations are in diverse neighborhoods will also create a more welcoming environment for your community by ensuring all voters can vote close to where they live.

Improve Language Access

Federal law requires counties to provide translated election materials if 5% of citizens of the voting age population have limited English proficiency.² In Kansas, that means only Finney, Ford, Grant, Seward, and Haskell counties have materials in Spanish. But just because a group of people doesn't meet the federal population threshold doesn't mean they don't deserve access to election materials in their primary language.

Providing translated election materials is a simple way to expand access to the vote, and your local election office has the authority to make it happen.

Implement “Vote From Jail” Programs

There is a lot of confusion about what happens to your eligibility to vote when you interact with the criminal legal system. It is critical that being incarcerated is not used as an excuse to limit access to this vital civil right. When someone is in jail, they are typically being held pre-trial, and therefore they have been charged but ***not convicted*** of any crime—meaning they are still eligible to vote.

If someone is a citizen, a resident of Kansas, at least 18 years of age, and not serving a sentence for a felony conviction, they are eligible to vote—even in jail! Making sure people are aware of this right by offering education, registration, and voting programs at local detention facilities is a critical step to ensuring people can continue to exercise their right to vote.

Prepaid Postage for Mail-in Ballots

In the modern age, fewer and fewer people make a practice of keeping stamps on hand. No one’s ballot should be delayed or even overlooked simply because of a stamp. Implementing prepaid postage for all mail-in ballots is a simple way to ensure that eligible votes are counted.

¹ *All Democracy is Local*, ACLU of Kansas, 2018

² 52 U.S.C. § 10503

ACLU Kansas

P.O. Box 917
Mission, KS 66202
www.aclukansas.org