



Opposition Testimony for SB 445 – Banning Drop Boxes
Oral In-person Testimony of Aileen Berquist
Community Engagement Manager, American Civil Liberties Union of Kansas
Senate Committee on Federal and State Affairs
Thursday, February 17, 2022, 10:30 AM - 144-S

Committee Chairs and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony today. My name is Aileen Berquist. I am the Community Engagement Manager and lobbyist for the ACLU of Kansas. We are a nonpartisan, non-profit organization that works to preserve and strengthen the civil rights and liberties of every person in Kansas.

The ACLU of Kansas opposes the passage of SB 445. This bill is one of many election-related bills introduced this session that limits Kansans' access to voting for no discernable reason. Ballot drop boxes are a safe, accessible way for citizens to cast their vote. They provide much-needed flexibility to voters in our busy modern world—flexibility that is even more crucial during a worldwide pandemic. Removing them is unnecessary and could severely curtail Kansans' ability to cast their ballots.

The 2020 election was a triumph for civic engagement: despite a crushing pandemic, a record number of citizens cast their vote in the most secure election in United States history.¹ Our own Secretary of State, Scott Schwab, has consistently defended the integrity of the 2020 elections. In fact, he has said that Kansas is one of the most secure states in terms of preventing election fraud. And yet, this session, we have seen a slate of bills introduced that would limit access to voting for thousands of Kansans—supposedly with the intent to make our elections safer.

Ballot drop boxes are a secure and convenient way for voters to get their ballots where they need to go.² In the 2020 election, nearly 40% of voters nationwide used drop boxes, up from 16% in 2016³. Reasons for using drop boxes in place of other advanced voting methods have been attributed to USPS slowdowns and coronavirus concerns⁴. These drop boxes are not only safe and secure, they are **necessary** to ensure voters are able to safely participate in our elections during an ongoing pandemic.

This body should not be in the business of making voting harder for Kansans. Limiting safe, accessible avenues for ballot return is an attack on voting rights and is an absolutely unnecessary interference of this body into what our state's own election official says is a safe, fraud-free process. We ask that this committee not recommend this bill and instead focus on legislation that will expand voting access to Kansans and strengthen our voting systems by empowering local election officials.

¹ <https://www.cisa.gov/news/2020/11/12/joint-statement-elections-infrastructure-government-coordinating-council-election>

² <https://www.cisa.gov/rumorcontrol>

³ https://healthyelections.org/sites/default/files/2021-06/Ballot_Drop_Boxes.pdf

⁴ <https://kansasreflector.com/2022/02/12/states-target-ballot-drop-boxes-in-fight-over-voting-rights/>