

Date: February 20th, 2023

Bill number: SB 208

Opponent (In Person)

Caleb Smith, Civic Engagement Campaign Director, Kansas Appleseed

Chairman Thompson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Caleb Smith; I am a Campaign Director for Kansas Appleseed Center for Law and Justice, a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to the belief that Kansans, working together, can build a state full of thriving, inclusive, and just communities.

### **Kansas Appleseed opposes SB 208.**

The research is clear: when more people vote, communities thrive. Higher voter turnout results in better physical and mental health, more access to comprehensive health care, more secure housing, more nutritious food, better quality education, more jobs with livable wages, less crime, and lower measures of discrimination.<sup>1 2</sup>

Early voting options help Kansans vote. These options help address the effects of potential Election Day obstacles like bad weather, long lines at polling places, or the inability to take time off from work. The use of secure remote ballot drop boxes is demonstrated to improve voter turnout - one recent study has shown that they can increase turnout by as much as 7%.<sup>3</sup>

This bill would require all remote ballot boxes to be closed after regular business hours and be observed by members of two different, established political parties. All while being required to be placed inside county election offices instead of near the voters they are meant to serve. Not only do these regulations defeat the purpose of remote ballot boxes by stripping them of their accessibility, but they also place unnecessary and onerous complications on election administration. Adding the difficulty and expense of finding two volunteers to monitor remote drop boxes for twenty full business days could prove to be an insurmountable challenge for many local election officials. Ironically, this proposition in many cases could prove even more costly than having county employees assigned to the task after factoring in the expense and time required to recruit, train, and manage these volunteers.

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<sup>1</sup> Yagoda, N. "Addressing Health Disparities Through Voter Engagement." *Annals of Family Medicine*. 2019. <https://www.annfammed.org/content/17/5/459.long>

<sup>2</sup> Abramovita, M. et.al. "Voting Is Social Work." *Journal of Social Work Education* (2019). <https://doi.org/10.1080/10437797.2019.1656690>

<sup>3</sup> Collingwood, L., et. al. "Do Drop Boxes Improve Voter Turnout?" *Election Law Journal* (2018). <https://www.liebertpub.com/doi/pdfplus/10.1089/elj.2017.0450>

Equally concerning, this bill would limit the use of remote ballot boxes to only one per county, no matter its size or population. Requiring that election clerks utilize only a single ballot box, hidden away from the voters that the remote boxes are designed to help will only serve to undercut their effectiveness. Especially for voters in rural areas with slower postal delivery, elderly voters, voters with disabilities, and voters with shift work who do not have the flexibility to take time off work to vote.

Local election clerks should be able to do what is best for the voters in the counties that they serve. Limiting each county, no matter the geographic size or population, to a single remote ballot box located within their election office and observed by two volunteers serves no purpose other than making voting more difficult for Kansans and administering elections more expensive for election officials.

For all these reasons, Kansas Appleseed opposes SB 208.