

**STATE OF KANSAS
SENATE CHAMBER**

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DINAH H. SYKES
SENATE DEMOCRATIC LEADER

Chairman Olson and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit my written opposition to SB 388 and SB 389.

The freedom to choose our leaders and to use our voices to influence projects within our communities is foundational to American democracy. Creating barriers that make it more difficult for someone to vote – no matter how big or small the restriction – makes each of us a little less free.

The bills being considered today undermine our democracy in two critical ways: SB 388 would create an arbitrary and unnecessary restriction that will significantly limit voters' ability to assure their ballot is counted in an election. And SB 389 creates further administrative hurdles for our already stretched-thin election officials in the service of perpetuating and legitimizing a lie that serves no one except those who wish to further disenfranchise their fellow Americans.

No voter should sit out an election because they didn't have a safe and accessible option for casting their ballot. Voting by advance ballot is one of those options, and our state was a leader in 2020 in using those ballots while maintaining a secure and efficient process. Secretary of State Scott Schwab testified to that effect multiple times last session as this body attempted to create new obstacles for voters under the guise of "election security."

Ballot drop boxes – which would not be allowed as a ballot collection method under SB 388 – are a safe, reliable option that increase accessibility for many voters. Speaking to the House Elections committee earlier this week, Secretary Schwab shared that his office continued to receive November 2020 ballots well into March of 2021, while ballots submitted via drop box are received the same day. Thousands of Kansas voters used drop boxes in 2020 and 2021 because they are a safe, convenient way to ensure your vote is counted.

There is no reasonable explanation for taking away this option for Kansas voters, unless disenfranchisement is the goal. And given the intent of SB 389, disenfranchisement and disillusionment are not unfathomable explanations. By requiring election offices to use paper

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ballots with distinctive watermarks, we would be creating more work for our election officials and undermining the work they've done to modernize and secure our election processes. This legislation would also signal to Kansans that our current voting systems are lacking, which is simply untrue. Our election officials work hard to follow the law to the letter, and election offices have systems in place to deter and detect irregularities or violations in the voting process, both by mail and in person.

Both of these bills are solutions in search of a problem. There is simply no need to further restrict voting options for Kansans. There is no evidence that our systems require the changes these bills elicit in order to maintain their security and reliability. Encouraging all voters to participate in this process which is fundamental to our democracy should be the intention of all politicians. These bills do not further that goal, and instead suggest to our fellow Kansans to distrust a system that has done nothing but deliver reliably. I urge you to reject these proposals which do not further the rights and freedoms of Kansas voters.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dinah H. Sykes".

Senator Dinah Sykes

A block of four handwritten signatures in black ink. From top to bottom, they read: "Mary Ann", "Tom Hawk", "Detha Faust Bourdane", and "Ethan Corson".