Date: February 11th, 2023

Bill Number: SB 208 *Restricting the number of remote ballot boxes; providing monitoring requirements.*

Written-Only Opponent Testimony

Jonathan D. Smith *on behalf of self*

Chairman Thompson and members of the committee,

Thank you for your time in reading my testimony today.

My name is Jonathan Smith. I have lived on the east side of Topeka for 9 years and in Topeka in general totaling 25 years. I have had the fortune of living within 10 minutes of the election office in my county for the entire time. It has never been a concern to me when my advanced ballot could reach the election office during election seasons because I have worked from 6 AM until the early afternoon for nearly a decade. I would be able to drive my ballot to the election office after work almost any day. But this wasn't always the case, and for so many Kansans, this is not the case at all.

Kansas is known to be an incredibly rural state. According to the United States Census Bureau, Kansas ranks as the 10th Least population dense state in the union. This means that very many Kansans live out in the country. Specifically **in** my county of **Shawnee**, we have **one single advanced ballot drop box** that we can bring our ballots to in person. Shawnee County has a population of 178,909 as of 2020. The City of Topeka that resides in Shawnee county has a population 126, 587. This means **52,000 people live up to 30 minutes away from the only drop box in the county**. (Image attached to page two)

With those facts being known, the real-life implications of living and working outside of the city make it increasingly difficult to make the time to make that trip, and the personal anecdotes of my own friends and family have told me that people just don't trust the mail-in voting system because they fear the delays that the USPS is known to have, but the idea of driving up to an hour round trip to vote doesn't sound much better, causing some of them to sit the entire voting process out entirely, which is where we are heading if this passes, in my opinion.

Working a full-time day job, working evenings, taking care of a loved one, being a caregiver, living out in the country, working or vacationing outside of state during an election, inclement weather. There are many roadblocks to quickly delivering your ballot to your local election office; it is my opinion that we should be making it easier. Expanding access to drop boxes in rural communities, allowing additional days for mail-in ballots to arrive at the election office, educating the voting public that the TRUE election vote count isn't until the State Board of Canvassers meet on December 1st in a General Election.

Finally, in regards to mandating an affiliate of each recognized political party to monitor drop boxes, this seems incredibly arduous, expensive, difficult to arrange, and in a time where it is already difficult for people to volunteer or work for an election office, this bill is only causing more tension towards and for those workers instead of less. Additionally, the **entire point** of a drop box is to have a secure point to drop off an advanced ballot where, perhaps, the election office may be out of reach or not currently staffed. By forcing it to be open during election office hours only, this bill is completely making the ballot box redundant and pointless.

It is for all of these reasons that I am providing Opponent testimony in regards to SB 208 and request that the committee oppose the passing of this bill.

Thank you so much for your time,

Jonathan Smith of Topeka, Kansas

Topeka City Boundary

Private Member ⓘ
City of Topeka

Summary

City of Topeka Municipal Boundary

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Feature Layer

July 18, 2019
Info Updated

June 28, 2019
Data Updated

June 28, 2019
Published Date

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