



SUPPORT FOR SB 412 – Permanent advance voting status extended to any registered voter but such status will end if two consecutive elections are missed.

Written Testimony of Nadine Johnson

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COMMITTEE ON ETHICS, ELECTIONS, & LOCAL GOVT – February 20, 2020

Chairwoman Bowers and Members of this Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony. My name is Nadine Johnson. I am the Executive Director of the ACLU of Kansas. We are a nonpartisan, non-profit organization that works to preserve and strengthen the constitutional liberties of every person in Kansas. We support SB 412 as a positive step in helping Kansas's democracy thrive. The fact that in Kansas recently was ranked the 9th-hardest state in which to vote only underscores the need for immediate reform.¹

Kansas should pursue efforts to encourage citizen participation in elections through simple, common-sense reforms such as permanent advanced ballots. Although Kansas citizens can already vote by mail, most voters must renew their status each election cycle. This bill gives us the opportunity to both make it easier to vote and easier for our local governments to run elections, with less burden on Election Day for both. This simple reform would provide greater access to the polls for Kansans across the state.

Permanent advanced voting can increase voter turnout and makes it easier for people to participate in our democracy. Permanent advanced voting would also help shorten lines and ease the burden on local governments on Election Day, while increasing voter participation across the state, particularly in our rural communities. With permanent advanced voting, Kansas can provide more access to voters regardless of how they choose to participate.

Permanent advanced voting works. It is not a novel, untested concept in elections; its effectiveness is documented in other localities across the country. Here in Kansas, as well, voting by advanced ballot is already a success.

Passing permanent advanced voting will both expand Kansans' access to the ballot box, and help move Kansas in the right direction to make voting more accessible to all of its citizens. The ACLU of Kansas supports SB 412 and urges this Committee to pass it favorably. Thank you for your time and consideration.

¹ Cost of Voting in the American States, Quan Li, Michael J. Pomantell, and Scot Schraufnagel, Election Law Journal: Rules, Politics, and Policy, Sep 2018, 234-247, available at <http://doi.org/10.1089/elj.2017.0478>.