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SB445 Prohibiting the use of additional ballot boxes for the return of advance voting ballots.

Opposition Testimony to be presented written only

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We are submitting opposition testimony to SB445 which seeks to eliminate the use of ballot boxes outside of the county election office.

Many people today think that voting is their right, that it has always been their right as something laid down in the Constitution. It is interesting to note the actual history of voting which began as something only white, male, landowners could participate in. Access to the ballot box has not been a power freely or widely distributed. The 15th Amendment passed in 1868 guaranteed the right to vote to Black men. The 19th Amendment passed years later in 1920 extended voting rights to white women. It took the 26th Amendment in 1971 to establish the voting age as 18. Then we must back up to 1965 to acknowledge the Voting Rights Act of 1965. We would like to bring special attention to that piece of legislation as it pertains to our community because it sought to dismantle widespread systematic and purposeful efforts to suppress the Black vote.

Time and time again, groups of people petitioned their government to gain full participation in their representation. Time and time again it took what amounted to a political act of God – that is an amendment to the Constitution – to extend voting rights across the population. The moral arc of history has bent toward making it easier for people to vote. Indeed, the MORAL arc has been toward removing barriers to voting. Despite all the movement at the Federal level, implementation has always been left to the states and that is why we are here today.

In Johnson County, it is clear election officers are committed to the spirit of the Constitutional Amendments that seek to encourage voting participation. One can request an advance ballot or sign up to be on a permanent advance ballot list and receive a mail-in ballot in the mail 20 days ahead of Election Day. The Election Office offered early in-person voting at eight sites around the county beginning October 23rd, including two Saturdays and Monday – Friday voting until 7 pm. And then there were 8 ballot boxes around town. When combined with the early voting opportunities, that meant there were chances for a voter to get their ballot in.

That is fantastic news given the troubles the United States Post Office admitted having delivering mail in a timely fashion. The point must be made that the widespread availability of ballot boxes is necessary because the USPS is recognized as perhaps not the most reliable way to deliver a ballot.

the Johnson County Election Office has verified the following information:

- All of the drop boxes are uncovered and opened 20-days prior to an election, which by Kansas law is when advance mail ballots are sent to the voters. All drop boxes are closed and locked at 7 pm on election day.
- Seven (7) the drop boxes were installed in the fall (early-mid October) of 2020, when they were provided by the Kansas Secretary of State Office. The drop boxes at the Johnson County Election Office have been in place since the parking lot was reconstructed in 2017. Some form of a drop box had been in place at the Jo Co Election Office for years/decades – as a drop slot in the building. Similar to a book drop at a Library.
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Please refer to the attached graph. In the 2021 General Election, we see that 14,917 ballots came in through the 8 freestanding ballot boxes. (Ones not associated with a polling place.) A quick glance at the official final results from the election shows that the total ballots cast was 111,761. Doing the math reveals that around 13% of ballots came in through ballot boxes.

It is not a good use of time to speculate as to *why* 13% of the population chose that method to return their ballot. The fact remains that for those 14 thousand voters, the ballot box was the method that made the most sense for them. For 13% of the population, the ballot box was the least restrictive method of voting.

Senate Bill 445 specifies that the only allowable ballot box “shall be located inside the [county election office] premises and shall be continuously observed by an employee of the county” essentially during business hours.

When one compares the difference in ease and access to voting from what currently is in place in Johnson County and what this bill seeks to enact, the bill can only be seen as a means to suppress voter participation.

This bill cannot be addressed apart from related a bill that seeks to eliminate ways to expedite turning in a ballot and a bill to restrict accepting ballots after 7 pm on Election Day. All these bills would have the result of disenfranchising thousands of voters. We urge you to vote no on Senate Bill 445.

Date	Post Office	EO Drive		EO Front		Blue		Central		Shawnee		Spring Hill		Northeast		Total
		Through	Dropbox	Valley	Library	Resource	Library	Library	Library	Library	Library	Offices	Offices	Offices		
10/14/21																0
10/15/21				1												1
10/18/21	7	25	6	6	7					2	1	11			65	
10/19/21	3	45		19	24	2				9	2	3			109	
10/20/21	100	76	5	47	40	1				27		21			321	
10/21/21	502	92		26	28	2				18	3	19			695	
10/22/21	469	94	10	34	32	2				15		18			677	
10/23/21	471														471	
10/25/21	690	301		171	91	6				29	8	80			1,435	
10/26/21	35	322	32	101	78	8				8	2	62			695	
10/27/21	1,023	195	18	111	91	4				11		75			1,581	
10/28/21	923	192		70	72	2				10		47			1,353	
10/29/21	607	231	40	79	66	11				12	11	57			1,148	
11/1/21	1,688	637	35	329	241	27				41	6	198			3,360	
11/2/21	36	384	13	203	122	14				35	8	138			1,023	
11/3/21	728	170	7	85	90	10				10	4	66			1,233	
11/4/21	533														533	
11/5/21	217														217	
Total	8,032	2,764	166	1,282	982	89	170	592	45	795	795	14,917				

All Drop Boxes Closed & Locked at 7pm Election Day Nov 2nd then ballots retrieved on Nov 3rd.