

Testimony of Birdie Alt
Self Represented

Committee on Federal and State Affairs
February 10, 2022

Senate Bill 388
Opponent
WRITTEN-ONLY Testimony
785-371-7231

Chairman Olson and members of the committee,

My name is Birdie Alt. I was born and raised in Lawrence, Kansas, living in Lawrence for most of my life. I am a senior at the University of Kansas studying communications and journalism. I work two jobs outside of school, participate in multiple student organizations and community events, and help take care of my grandparents. School and work and the rest of my life keep me busy, and staying politically engaged is a challenge. This is not an abnormal experience for students and others in my community.

Managing a full course load, studying, holding a job, staying involved in the community, and attempting to maintain a social life leaves little room in the average student's schedule. This is why vote-by-mail and dropboxes are the best means of voting for students not only in Kansas but across the country. It gives students a larger window of time to vote, allows both in-state and out-of-state students to fulfill their civic duties, and ensures an accessible opportunity for students to participate in the democratic process.

The National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) reported that 30-60% of registered students across Kansas schools did not vote in recent elections. This trend was seen not only on college campuses but also across the entire United States. A study done by the Center for Information & Research on

Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) also found that half of those surveyed cited accessibility to polling locations as the main reason they did not vote in the last election. This makes voting by mail and drop boxes vital to students' voting infrastructure. Mail-in voting is used by students who can't easily make it to polling locations because of class, work, or a disability. Vote by mail and drop boxes are also responsible for keeping students safe while exercising their civic duty during the pandemic, including those who couldn't return home from campus.

By requiring the use of the United States Postal Service to return an advance ballot by mail, which would essentially ban drop boxes, SB 388 goes directly against voting trends, data, and, most importantly, Kansas students.

In 2020 we saw the USPS's shortcomings in handling such high ballot numbers. Centralizing the entire mail-in system under the USPS could have even more harm in future elections. Kansas Students deserve the right to cast their ballot safely. The legislature should focus on passing pro-voter laws that empower Kansas students to vote and allow local election officials to respond to the needs of voters in our communities- not restricting voting methods that we've safely used for decades.

I urge you to vote down HB 388. Stand with the students who represent the future of Kansas and our county by protecting our voting rights and access to mail-in voting and drop boxes.