

TO: House Committee on Elections
RE: SB 208 – Written Testimony
FR: Matthew Kleinmann
DT: March 6, 2023

Dear Chairman Proctor and Committee Members:

As a concerned resident of Wyandotte County, Kansas, I urge you to **reject SB 208**, which seeks to prohibit all remote advanced ballot boxes. Any measure that limits the ability of Kansans to vote safely, fairly, and with adequate accessibility is a direct affront to our cherished values of liberty and democracy.

Absentee voting has deep roots in American history, dating back to the Civil War when Union Republicans championed absentee voting access for American troops. Even though many Democrats at the time resisted calls to allow soldiers to submit ballots by mail, the practice was codified in many states ahead of the presidential election of 1864, when roughly 150,000 to 230,000 Union soldiers cast absentee ballots from the battlefield.

The 1864 U.S. election demonstrated the importance of access to voting, especially for deployed soldiers who could cast their ballots through a new absentee voting system. The ability of soldiers to vote proved secured a mandate from the Northern states for President Abraham Lincoln. This historical example highlights the **importance of ensuring that all citizens, including those who cannot physically make it to a polling station, have access to vote**. Limiting access to ballot boxes in Kansas could hurt voter turnout and restrict the ability of citizens to exercise their democratic rights.

Since then, absentee voting laws have continued to expand and have proven incredibly popular, causing demand for the option to increase. To date, every single state permits some form of absentee voting for its civilian population, and 34 states do not even require voters to provide a reason for needing to perform their civic duty from home. Five of these states, including conservative Utah, have even gone one step further by moving to a predominantly all-absentee voter system in which voters automatically receive absentee ballots.

There is bipartisan support for absentee voting, as recent polling by President Trump's pollster found that 76 percent of Americans, including Republicans and Democrats, want the freedom to vote in absentia¹.

Restricting advanced voting will limit the opportunities for Kansans to participate in the democratic process. As a Kansan, I firmly believe that we must take every possible measure to protect our citizens' liberty and ensure they have the freedom to exercise their democratic rights. The ability to vote is a fundamental aspect of our democracy, and we must do everything possible to ensure it remains accessible to all.

For these reasons, I urge you to oppose SB 208 and to **work towards providing more ballot boxes, not fewer**, thereby allowing greater access and opportunity for Kansas voters to cast their ballots. Thank you for considering my testimony.

Respectfully submitted,

Matthew Kleinmann

¹ Exclusive: Trump pollster finds strong demand for expanded absentee voting:
https://www.axios.com/2020/05/01/absentee-voting-trump-pollster?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=newsletter_axiosam&stream=top