

Opposition to HB2210

My name is Mark Dugan. I chair the PAC associated with Mainstream Coalition, and I practice law in Overland Park. I speak in opposition to HB2210, which restricts the ability of voters to change party affiliation.

Under this bill, the deadline to change party affiliation, currently 14 days before the primary election, would be moved up to coincide with the deadline for candidate filing. We oppose this restriction, or any other restriction, on the ability of voters to affiliate with the political party of their choice.

MAIN*PAC endorses and supports moderate candidates, Republicans and Democrats. We make our endorsement decisions based on our core principles: separation of religion and government and support for public education. We think these issues are important to most Kansans.

While the actual number of party switchers is small, this issue is important to Mainstream Coalition members. Because Mainstream is a nonpartisan organization, we have many Republican members and many Democratic members. In recent years, a significant number of our members have changed party affiliation, some Democrat to Republican, some Republican to Democrat. Our members do this thoughtfully, based on deeply held convictions.

Many Mainstream members, like many legislators, feel strong party loyalty, whether as Republicans or Democrats. But many are less tied to any party, and see themselves as independents who simply want to vote for the best candidate. For these conscientious voters, any restriction on the ability to choose party affiliation is a restriction on the ability to choose their leaders. This is particularly true in Kansas, where the Republican party has made such strides that often the election is effectively over after the primary, with either no Democratic opposition, or no meaningful Democratic opposition, in the general election.

Finally, while Mainstream is nonpartisan and many of our members are unaffiliated with any political party, we do support robust debate between, or among, the various political parties. The restriction of HB2210, however, creates an incentive for Mainstream members and thousands of other independent voters to leave the Democratic and Republican parties to retain voting flexibility, or not to join those parties in the first place. This will not be a welcome development for any political party.

For these reasons, we ask that the restriction on primary voting in HB2210 not be permitted to become law, and that the principle of limited government be applied to the exercise of democracy in Kansas. Thank you.