

In Support of HB # 2992

For the last decade, members of **Johnson County MoveOn** have been actively educating the public about policy issues that affect citizens and promoting fair and transparent democratic processes. Over these years our members have realized that in order to ensure a true democracy, all citizens' must be able to participate in the electoral process at all levels of government.

To this end, many of our members have worked in cooperation with other organizations to increase voter registration and voter turnout. Unfortunately, a false claim of widespread voter fraud resulted in huge numbers of legitimate voters being disenfranchised, but thanks to a recent federal court decision, Kansas citizens are once again allowed to register without producing sometimes unavailable birth certificates. Also thanks to Brian McClendon, a 2018 candidate for Secretary of State, Kansans now have an easy electronic method to check on their registration and/or register. These two things were significant steps toward improving the accessibility of registration and voting in Kansas. Now we have another opportunity to continue improving our election system: HB 2092

We commend Representatives Jeff Pittman and Gail Finney for the recent introduction of House Bill 2092 which offers same-day registration (SDR) to all qualified residents, which means Kansans will be able to register and cast a ballot on the same day. As an organization we want to state our support for this bill that will be heard Tuesday, Feb 19 at 3:30 pm in the House Elections Committee. It offers another giant step forward to expand enfranchisement and participation.

As of January 2019, 17 states plus the District of Columbia offer same-day registration (SDR). These states provide various measures to ensure the security of same-day voter registration, and when security measures are in place as included in HB 2092, casting a vote in Kansas will be an easier process. Same-day registration has increased voter turnout in these 17 states an average of approximately 5%.

Those of us in **Johnson County MoveOn** who have helped people register have observed that there are far too many obstacles that confuse and prevent citizens from voting, not the least of which is the requirement to register almost a month before the actual election. Closing registration so far in advance is problematic, especially for first-time young voters who don't realize they can register before their 18th birthday if they will be eighteen by or before the following election. When they turn 18, they learn it's too late to register for the election in which they could have voted.

The advance registration deadline also prevents those who move into our state just prior to election day from voting in their new state.

Someone with a name change may not realize that they must re-register under their new name. With same-day registration, they would be able to make the change and vote at the same time.

The complexity and the many deadlines present a very real and confusing obstacle to those citizens who are not as aware of political processes and rules as those of us who are deeply involved. Even though they are busy working one or more jobs, raising children, and taking care of the myriad responsibilities of daily living, they still want to be involved in our democracy.

Sometimes people arrive at a polling place and learn they have been purged, either because of the faulty *Cross Check* system that Kansas still uses or because they haven't voted in the past two presidential elections. As our voter laws stand now, if purged from the rolls, a provisional ballot would not be counted as they were not registered. Any small discrepancy on the provisional ballot will result in its not being counted. In the last election, provisional ballots were thrown out if the signature on the original registration did not match exactly the signature on the provisional ballot.

Same-day registration would mean provisional ballots would be needed only for people who got an advanced ballot and forgot to mail it back. (And in most cases, they would have enough time to go home, get it, and hand carry it to the poll or election office.)

Members of *JoCo MoveOn* who have been poll workers state that confusion about the name/ address change re-registration requirement is a major reason for citizens to be turned away from the polls. If they have moved, they sometimes go to the wrong polling place. If they could do an address or name change that same day, they would be assured of voting in the area in which they now live and have their vote counted. There is no good reason for the process to be so complicated.

When citizens are turned away from the polling site, they may feel rejection and discouragement. Many people, when prevented from voting in an election, give up participating in future elections. We cannot afford to let potential voters drop out of future election activity if we want to keep our democracy vibrant and relevant to the needs of all people.

Not only will same-day registration simplify voting for citizens, it will simplify and streamline the process for election officials and poll workers, as well as eliminate the need for volunteers to spend thousands of hours of time setting up registration tables at public events and locations. Since Kansas recently received the dubious "honor" of being named the 10th most difficult state in which to vote, same-day registration will undoubtedly move us to a more desirable position on that list.

Therefore *Johnson County MoveOn* officially supports House Bill # 2092. We see this bill as a major step forward in engaging more voices and strengthening our democracy.