

FEBRUARY 16, 2022
TESTIMONY OF JAMI REEVER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
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IN SUPPORT OF SB 391
SENATE COMMITTEE ON FEDERAL AND STATE AFFAIRS

Members of the Senate Committee on Federal and State Affairs:

My name is Jami Reever; I am the Executive Director for Kansas Appleseed Center for Law and Justice, a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to the belief that Kansans, working together, can build a state full of thriving, inclusive, and just communities.

Kansas Appleseed supports SB 391. Providing voters with more candidate information on the ballot encourages more informed voting.

Kansas Appleseed strongly believes that Kansas is better off when more people vote. Research shows that communities with more voters have more access to comprehensive health care, secure housing, nutritious food, quality education, jobs with livable wages, while also having less crime and lower measures of discrimination.¹

One of the primary factors driving lower voter participation, particularly in local elections, is a lack of information about the candidates.² Voter turnout is correlated with the information voters can find, including the information on sample ballots.³

Including more information helps voters make better informed decisions while voting. Studies on the effect of candidate name order effects have found that the more information voters had, the less a role higher ballot position would play - indicating more informed voting.^{4 5}

¹ Yagoda, N. "Addressing Health Disparities Through Voter Engagement." *Annals of Family Medicine*. 2019. <https://www.annfammed.org/content/17/5/459.long>

² Brennan, J. "Increasing Voter Turnout in Local Elections." *National Civic Review* (2020). <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/10.32543/naticivirevi.109.1.0016.pdf>

³ King, B. "State online voting and registration lookup tools: Participation, confidence, and ballot disposition." *Journal of Information Technology & Politics* (2019). <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/19331681.2019.1639581>

⁴ Brockington, D. "A Low Information Theory of Ballot Position Effect." *Political Behavior* (2003). <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1023/A:1022946710610>

⁵ MacInnis, B. et al. "Candidate name order effects in New Hampshire." *PLOS ONE* (2021). <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0248049>

Providing voters more information on the ballot can also reduce racial and gender penalties candidates might experience. Voters frequently use shortcuts like ballot position, party identification, or the candidates name to make choices.⁶ Low information voters often penalize candidates based on perceived demographic traits guessed from their name, but including even a small amount of additional information on the ballot can reduce this effect.⁷

Including the number of years a candidate has been an incumbent on the ballot provides voters with another piece of information that can help them make an informed vote. More information leads to more voting, and helps eliminate racial and gender bias that may exist when only a candidate's name is on the ballot. For all these reasons, Kansas Appleseed supports the passage of SB 391.

⁶ Fiske, S. & Taylor, S. "Social Cognition: From Brains to Culture." Thousand Oaks: Sage (2013).

⁷ Crowder, M., Gadarian, S., & Trounstine, J. "Voting Can Be Hard, Information Helps." Urban Affairs Review (2020).
<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/1078087419831074>