



PRESS RELEASE

# **Voting Rights Coalition Comes to Agreement with Kansas to Expand Opportunities for Voter Registration**

SEPTEMBER 30, 2021

**"This agreement to bring the state of Kansas back into compliance with the National Voter Registration Act is a win for the residents of Kansas, who will now have more access to voter registration and greater opportunity to vote and enjoy full participation in the democratic process."**

Kansans have additional opportunities to register to vote or update their voter registrations through two government agency offices across the state, thanks to an agreement between a coalition of civil rights agencies and the State of Kansas.

The two agencies--the Kansas Department of Health and Environment and the Kansas Department for Children and Families--will expand opportunities for voter registration, in compliance with the National Voter Registration Act (NVRA). Statewide, these agencies have committed to providing additional resources to help people receiving public benefits who want to register to vote.

These changes come after a careful negotiation process between Governor Kelly and Kansas voting rights advocacy non-profit Loud Light, who was represented by think tank Demos, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Kansas, and the ACLU's national Voting Rights Project.

"This agreement to bring the state of Kansas back into compliance with the National Voter Registration Act is a win for the residents of Kansas, who will now have more access to voter registration and greater opportunity to vote and enjoy full participation in the democratic process," said Brenda Wright, Interim Director of Legal Strategies at Demos. "We will continue to work with the state to maintain a seamless registration process for its residents."

"The most important takeaway is that we're opening up opportunities to register to vote. Voter participation is always our biggest priority," said Davis Hammet, Executive Director of Loud Light.

In November 2019 the parties met to discuss deficiencies in the state agencies' compliance under the NVRA. The NVRA, passed in 1993, set certain requirements for state agencies providing public assistance benefits regarding voter registration assistance. Although KDHE and KDCF may have been in compliance previously, recent administrations allowed the agencies to abandon the obligations under this law, according to the coalition.

The written agreements between the State and the advocacy groups successfully helped the parties avoid litigation. The agreements establish milestones to get the state back in compliance.

Some of these requirements include updating the agencies' policies, incorporating voter registration information into benefits material, and providing registration information and applications at agency offices and on the agencies' websites and online application portals.

The effects of this agreement have already started, with KDCF and KDHE sending over 277,000 voter registrations through remedial mailings prior to the November 2020 general election.

"It's unfortunate and, frankly, unacceptable that Kansas fell out of compliance previously, but we appreciate the current leadership's cooperation to remedy our concerns and take concrete steps towards fulfilling their obligations to help Kansans register to vote," says Sharon Brett, Legal Director for the ACLU of Kansas.

The agreement's provisions will be in effect until June 30, 2025, although the state will still be expected to comply with NVRA regulations afterwards.



## Governor Laura Kelly Announces Expanded Voter Registration Opportunities for Kansans

Oct 1, 2021

Governor Laura Kelly today announced that, through an agreement between a coalition of civil rights agencies and the State of Kansas, Kansans statewide will now have expanded opportunities to register to vote or update voter registration.

Under the agreement, the Kansas Department of Health and Environment and the Kansas Department for Children and Families will expand opportunities for voter registration, in compliance with the National Voter Registration Act (NVRA). Statewide, the agencies have committed to providing additional resources to help people receiving public benefits who want to register to vote.

"Every lawfully eligible Kansans deserves an equal opportunity to cast his or her ballot in every election," **Governor Kelly said.** "By sharing resources and expanding opportunities to get registered to vote, we will encourage more voices to be heard at the polls and more Kansans to exercise this important right."

Governor Kelly's office worked closely with Kansas voting rights advocacy non-profit Loud Light, who was represented by think tank Demos, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Kansas, and the ACLU's national Voting Rights Project.

"The most important takeaway is that we're opening up opportunities to register to vote. Voter participation is always our biggest priority," **said Davis Hammet, Executive Director of Loud Light.**

In November 2019 the parties met to discuss deficiencies in state agencies' compliance under the NVRA. The NVRA, passed in 1993, set certain requirements for state agencies providing public assistance benefits regarding voter registration assistance. Although KDHE and KDCF may have been in compliance previously, previous administrations allowed the agencies to abandon the obligations under this law, according to the coalition.

The written agreements between the State and the advocacy groups successfully allowed the parties to avoid litigation. The agreements establish milestones to get the state back in compliance.

Requirements include:

- Updating the agencies' policies,
- Incorporating voter registration information into benefits material,
- And providing registration information and applications at agency offices and on the agencies' websites and online application portals.

The effects of this agreement have already started, with KDCF and KDHE sending over 277,000 voter registrations through remedial mailings prior to the November 2020 general election.

"It's unfortunate and, frankly, unacceptable that Kansas fell out of compliance previously, but we appreciate the current leadership's cooperation to remedy our concerns and take concrete steps towards fulfilling their obligations to help Kansans register to vote," **says Sharon Brett, Legal Director for the ACLU of Kansas.**

The agreement's provisions will be in effect until June 30, 2025, although the state will still be expected to comply with NVRA regulations afterwards.

"This agreement to bring the state of Kansas back into compliance with the National Voter Registration Act is a win for the residents of Kansas, who will now have more access to voter registration and greater opportunity to vote and enjoy full participation in the democratic process," **said Brenda Wright, Interim Director of Legal Strategies at Demos.** "We will continue to work with the state to maintain a seamless registration process for its residents."