

POLICY PRIORITIES: STRENGTHEN DEMOCRACY IN KANSAS



KANSAS APPLESEED

IMPROVING VOTING ENGAGEMENT IMPROVES COMMUNITIES

When Kansans are more civically engaged, they are more likely to vote and our entire communities benefit. Voting restrictions get in the way of making Kansas a better place for everyone to live, prevent voter engagement, and lead to lower representation among communities most impacted by policy decisions.

Kansans are healthier when voting is made more accessible.

States with fewer restrictions on voting have better-reported health outcomes.¹ Disenfranchisement throughout history has led to lower individual political participation and is associated with poorer health. Poor health hampers individual political participation, reinforcing a negative cycle.²

Voter engagement makes communities safer.

Voter engagement efforts improve community safety and participation, which have been linked with reductions in neighborhood crime over time.³

Voter engagement reduces income inequality.

Lower voting turnout is associated with more income inequality.⁴

The individual impact of voter engagement:

Tamisha, an Independence resident and owner of the Tree House of Early Learning Daycare, decided to run for the local school board to voice concerns about early education and the lack of quality childcare in Southeast Kansas. With no previous experience in politics, Tamisha connected with nonpartisan, nonprofit organizations—including Kansas Appleseed—to get involved and learn the ropes through nonpartisan trainings. She learned about getting to know voters, speaking publicly, hosting meet-and-greets, utilizing promotional materials, and using her voice to advocate within her community.



Tamisha is now a school board member thanks to an impressive campaign and the community-building skills she employed. Despite voter engagement's ability to strengthen community leadership and representation, new voting laws in Kansas have resulted in a chilling effect on voter engagement in Kansas.

OVERALL IMPACT OF VOTER ENGAGEMENT



Engaging voters, building community leadership, and increasing voting accessibility



Rise in civic participation and community involvement



Improved health, safety, and economic outcomes for towns, counties, and Kansas overall

REDISTRICTING

Kansas must respect communities of interest. Redistricting should not be subject to partisan gerrymandering—drawing lines only for political gain. Partisan redistricting can decrease turnout by more than 4%. Every Kansan matters, and everyone deserves to have their vote represented equally. A good redistricting process will require both empathy and an understanding of the full range of diverse communities that make up our great state.

“I know from my life and studies in college and law school that biased partisan redistricting hurts people of color the most. We teach our kids about fairness, not cheating, being a good sport, following the rules, but then when it comes to things that really affect our everyday lives such as voting rights, some people are okay with cheating and dishonesty. Partisan redistricting is cheating. It is dishonest. It is wrong.”

—Joy Springfield, Kansas attorney

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Sources:

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3. Wo, J. "The Neighborhood Context of Crime: A Longitudinal Examination Linking Voluntary Organizations, Voting Participation, and Crime." 2017. <https://escholarship.org/content/qt8db456nn/qt8db456nn.pdf>
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Justice for all.