



NEWS RELEASE

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Kansas Advisory Committee to the U. S. Commission on Civil Rights Releases Report: *Voting Rights and the Kansas Secure and Fair Elections (SAFE) Act*

The Kansas Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights released a report following a series of panel discussions on civil rights and voting in the state. The Committee examined the civil rights impact of the state's 2011 Secure and Fair Elections (SAFE) Act, and its requirements that (1) individuals provide documentary proof of citizenship when registering to vote; and (2) voters present photographic identification in order to cast their ballot at the polls. The Committee heard testimony from academic experts, community members, voting rights advocates, ballot integrity advocates, and elected officials.

Through this testimony, the Committee identified a number of concerns, including: inconsistent training and implementation resulting in individuals with valid identification being turned away at the polls; insufficient voter education to ensure awareness of new documentation requirements; circumstances under which individuals may be charged a fee to obtain the required documentation; the potential for disparate impact on the basis of a number of federally protected classes; and the importance of weighing measures intended to prevent fraud against the potential for voter disenfranchisement. The Committee also formulated a number of recommendations which may help to remedy some of these concerns moving forward.

Committee Chair Dr. Mildred Edwards said, “The civil rights of voters in Kansas are a high priority for our Committee. Both supporters and opponents of the SAFE Act agree that every vote matters. However, current evidence suggests that voter disenfranchisement is much more likely to occur than fraud; particularly the types of fraud the SAFE Act is designed to address. The Committee urges the Kansas General Assembly to reconsider voting requirements in Kansas in the context of these findings.”

The report can be viewed at: http://www.usccr.gov/sac_members/sac_members.php

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The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights is an independent, bipartisan agency charged with studying and advising the President and Congress on civil rights matters and issuing an annual federal civil rights enforcement report. Advisory Committees to the Commission conduct reviews and produce reports and recommendations concerning state and local civil rights issues. Appointees to the Committees serve four-year terms and are unremunerated. For more information about the work of the Commission and its Advisory Committees, visit <http://www.usccr.gov> and follow us on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/usccrgov>.