

Domestic Violence and Abuse Victims May Vote Without Addresses Being Made Public

Secretary of State's Office launches Kentucky Address Confidentiality Program

Kentuckians who are victims of domestic violence and abuse previously had to make the impossible choice between their safety and exercising the fundamental right to vote. Now, with the recent launch of Kentucky Secretary of State Alison Lundergan Grimes' Address Confidentiality Program (ACP), these individuals may be eligible to have their names and addresses kept out of publicly available voter records and vote via mail-in absentee ballot, allowing them to safely register to vote and participate in elections.

The ACP is administered by the Secretary of State's Office under KRS 14.300 to KRS 14.318 and related administrative regulations. But law enforcement officials will play a vital role in the program's success by educating eligible individuals about the ACP.

To be eligible, an individual must either have a current emergency protective order or domestic violence order under KRS Chapter 403, or be a victim of a specified offense in an ongoing criminal case or a criminal case that resulted in a conviction. Specified offenses include domestic violence and abuse, stalking, sex crimes, crimes against minor victims, and similar offenses under federal law or the laws of another state or territory. The applicant must also believe that disclosure of his or her address would endanger his or her safety, or the safety of the applicant's children.

There is no cost to apply to or participate in the ACP. To apply, an eligible individual or someone authorized on his or her behalf must complete an application and return it to the Secretary of State's Office. Applications are available at the offices of the Secretary of State, county clerks, and designated assistance agencies; online at www.sos.ky.gov; or by contacting the ACP at KACP@ky.gov or (844) 292-KACP. Anyone who needs help completing the application can contact the Secretary of State's Office or one of the designated assistance agencies located across the Commonwealth.

If an applicant is certified as a participant, he or she will be allowed to vote via absentee ballot, and his or her name and address will not be included on any publicly available voter records. In addition, participants' files are kept confidential unless required to be released by a court of law or requested by a law enforcement official. Certification lasts for two years, unless it is cancelled or the participant withdraws before that date. A participant may apply for renewal of certification prior to the expiration date.

The ACP is only one component of a victim's overall safety plan. While the ACP alone cannot keep a participant safe under all circumstances, it does enable participants to vote without fear for their or their children's safety.

Please visit www.sos.ky.gov for more information about the ACP, and encourage individuals who may be eligible and able to benefit from it to do the same.