



Kansas Press Association, Inc.

Dedicated to serving and advancing the interests of Kansas newspapers

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Feb. 4, 2016

To: Rep. John Barker, chair of the House Judiciary Committee

From: Doug Anstaett, executive director, Kansas Press Association

Re: Sub for SB18

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee:

I am Doug Anstaett, executive director of the Kansas Press Association. Thank you for the opportunity to discuss our newspaper association's support of Sub for Senate Bill 18, with amendments as suggested by a Kansas Judicial Council advisory committee.

The original language in SB 18 would have exempted all body and vehicle cam recordings made by law enforcement officers from the Kansas Open Records Act. With transparency becoming even more important each day in how our law enforcement officers interact with citizens, closing the records to public scrutiny forever surely would invite undo public resentment unnecessarily.

We've talked with one county legal adviser who says he now reviews all such recordings and that 95 percent of them show the officer did everything right during a traffic stop or other encounter that comes into question. It's likely only those rare occurrences where a use of force against a citizen or against an officer rose to an unacceptable level would the recordings be scrutinized.

We all have great respect for what law enforcement officers do to keep us safe. They risk their lives each and every day they put on the uniform. But they cannot be shielded from public scrutiny in the performance of their duties.

By treating officers' recordings as law enforcement criminal investigative records, there will still be a layer of protection, but it won't forever put the information under lock and key.

KORA's exception for investigative records is discretionary. Most of us would agree there are times when a timely release of such information, redacted to remove images of the innocent, victims or witnesses, might serve to calm a volatile situation.

KPA supports this bill if the balloon amendment is part of it. Thank you.