



Kansas Press Association, Inc.

Dedicated to serving and advancing the interests of Kansas newspapers

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March 27, 2017

To: Rep. John Barker, chair, House Federal and State Affairs Committee, and committee members

From: Doug Anstaett, executive director, Kansas Press Association

Re: Testimony in support of SB 70

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee:

I am Doug Anstaett, executive director of the Kansas Press Association. Thank you for the opportunity to briefly discuss SB 70, a bill referring to the Kansas Open Meetings Act.

Of all the calls we receive at the KPA office about governmental transparency, the No. 1 complaint every year is the perception that executive sessions are overused, and often abused. Other times, we become aware of sessions that don't even qualify under the legal exceptions for a closed session or that those sessions have strayed beyond the subjects that were supposed to be discussed behind closed doors.

This bill tries to bring more specificity to the process that needs to be followed for a closed session.

Currently, the justification for the closing and the subject to be discussed in the executive session quite often are almost identical, which provides little information to the public on the boundaries for the closed meeting.

This bill would change the motion for a closed session to first list the subject (s) to be discussed, followed by the justification (which exception is being cited that allows for such a discussion to take place out of public view). It also would require that the entire motion and statement be recorded in the minutes. Under current law, the motion is the only recorded evidence of a closed session.

We support those changes because they require more specific information to be provided to the public and news media. We also support the changes that bring more specificity to the various exceptions because the public often doesn't know what a certain statute cited might entail when it's listed as "K.S.A. 38-2212(d)(1) and amendments thereto."

Thank you to Sens. Marci Francisco and Molly Baumgardner for their bipartisan sponsorship of SB 70. We support its passage.