



LEAGUE OF WOMEN  
VOTERS  
of  
KANSAS

January 31, 2017

To: Senator Jacob LaTurner, Chair, Senate Committee on Federal and State Affairs

From Marge Ahrens, Co-President, League of Women Voters of Kansas

RE: SB 70, amending the Kansas Open Meetings Act – IN SUPPORT

Senator LaTurner and committee members:

For nearly 100 years, the League of Women Voters has worked for an informed, educated public who actively participate in our democracy. However, when governmental bodies fail in their duty to have open, accessible meetings, we no longer have an informed citizenry.

Dr. Cowles has done a thorough study of the 10 largest cities and the 10 largest counties in Kansas, and has found that almost all of these governmental bodies conduct some of their business without disclosing any meaningful information about the subjects and issues they were to discuss. During 2014, these governmental bodies conducted at least 200 hours of government business in complete secrecy. In fact, 88% of closed sessions were conducted without giving the public any meaningful information about the subjects and issues they were to discuss.

While the majority of city and county governments were conducting business in secrecy, the Manhattan City Commission showed that it didn't have to conduct any governmental business in secrecy and they haven't suffered in the process.

We believe that elected officials should always remember that they are responsible to the citizens of Kansas. When elected officials know that their actions are being observed by the public, they are more likely to do their best to govern responsibly. And when they don't, citizens can respond as needed.

Open government is NOT a partisan matter. We ask you to support the passage of Senate Bill 70, amending Kansas Open Meetings Act.