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A healthy government, answerable to the people, is an open system that allows all who request information the ability to access that which they need and often directly impacts them and/or their families. We are at the pivotal point where real changes are needed to modernize transparency in Kansas. Openness to information is a much-needed check and balance against corruption, misuse and secrecy. So, with this said - with transparency so vital to democracy – the question would be, why don't we have real transparency in Kansas? The short answer: fear and the unwillingness to change. Woodrow Wilson was onto something when he stated, "If you want to make enemies try to change something.". Transparency movements seem to always get the most opposition from the people who are in power, those who blindly believe with real change, they will be the ones with the most to lose.

I've become more aware of the danger to community from non-transparency. In a recent police fatal shooting, I personally witnessed the Topeka community on the edge of civil unrest, a lack of trust for law-enforcement, and a muted City Council.

I am very familiar with how municipalities work. Having served on the Topeka City Council for 16 years, I have never witnessed such a stall of information to a family and community as I have in the Dominic White shooting case. I watched the city council hide behind an interpretation of state law, not once using their option of discretionary choice as set in Kansas law for transparency. I watched a family and a community lose trust in law-enforcement, elected officials, and in our system.

Openness and true transparency is the fairest of processes for taxpayers, whose tax dollars go to create the very structures and policies that maintain the information they seek and have legal right to.

We can start by fixing this with the passage of this bill.