



February 13, 2018

TO: Sen. Rick Wilborn Chair, Senate Judiciary Committee
FROM: Ron Keefover, President of the Kansas Sunshine Coalition for Open Government
RE: Written Testimony in Support of SB 360

The Kansas Sunshine Coalition for Open Government urges the Judiciary Committee's favorable report of Senate Bill 360, which we view as a workable solution to the question of access to police videos. As was demonstrated by the lengthy controversy surrounding the police shooting death of Dominique White in Topeka, not divulging some police videos, or delaying their release for an inordinate length of time, creates public mistrust and only adds to problems attendant to law enforcement shootings.

In Topeka's situation, the citizenry seemed satisfied, with protests largely going away once footage of the armed suspect was released, but it was released belatedly after 12 weeks of controversy following the incident.

Topeka's case emphasized the great need for SB 360, which would at the very minimum make access to police videos available to the immediate family of the decedent *without* requiring representation by a lawyer. Beyond that change to the existing "dark state" treatment of police videos in Kansas, this bill would enable police departments to validate officer-involved shootings by making them public within 30 days of the incident.

Even more, the speedy release of such videos could enhance rights to a fair trial, since any resulting news stories would be remote in time to possible follow-up court proceedings. As a point of fact, though, there has never been a Kansas criminal conviction reversed on the grounds of pretrial publicity. I make that statement as a former 32-year employee in the administrative office of the Kansas Supreme Court, who has researched the issue extensively as part of the job duties.

Finally, and just for the Committee's edification, the Sunshine Coalition for Open Government is a statewide coalition established in 2000. It includes representatives of like-minded non-profit organizations, journalism and law professors, members of the news media and other citizens committed to promoting open government in Kansas.

I sincerely thank you and the Senate Judiciary Committee members for your consideration of our testimony, and would be delighted to visit with any committee members who may have questions regarding this bill.

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