



Kansas Press Association, Inc.

Dedicated to serving and advancing the interests of Kansas newspapers

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Feb. 18, 2019

To: Rep. Fred Patton , chairman, Rep. Bradley Ralph, vice chair, Rep. John Carmichael, ranking member, and members of the House Judiciary Committee

From: Doug Anstaett, on behalf of the Kansas Press Association

Re: Testimony supporting HB 2219

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee:

I am Doug Anstaett, consultant and lobbyist for the Kansas Press Association.

I come to you today in strong support of the intent of the language in House Bill 2219, which would require audio or video recording of public meetings in Kansas.

If we truly believe in transparency — and just about everyone says they do — this bill should be universally supported as well.

But there will be strong opposition from the associations that represent the agencies that will have to comply with this legislation, should it pass. They will argue that it is an unfunded mandate. They will argue that it will place an undue burden on those who are in charge of meetings of Kansas cities, counties, school boards, townships and other agencies.

A burden? Maybe. But open government and public access to the workings of government should never be considered a burden. It should be considered a right for citizens, and a duty for public servants.

Citizens do want to know what their government is doing. Often, though, meetings aren't scheduled at a convenient time for the public. Many of them take place during the day, when most citizens are working.

Recording of the proceedings is often taking place already as an aid to the clerks, secretaries and others who must document what action was taken, who voted for and against measures and other important information. Making that information available for public access in today's technological environment might be a challenge at first, but over time it could become the norm and almost routine.

The Kansas Press Association and its member newspapers support HB 2219. To aid in its implementation, it could be phased in over the next couple of years so that all boards, commissions, councils, agencies and others have time to get up to speed. It would be good for Kansas.

We therefore ask the committee to support the passage of HB 2219.