

STATE OF KANSAS

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HOUSE OF
REPRESENTATIVES

February 28, 2024

Committees:
Member:
Appropriations
Joint Committee on Corrections & Juvenile
Justice Oversight
Ranking Minority Member:
Agriculture and Natural Resources
Agriculture and Natural Resources Budget

To: Chairman Procter and Members of the Committee

I stand here before you today in support of HB 2617, which amends KSA: 46-214a and 46-288.

I bring this legislation before you for your consideration and ask you to consider the greater public interest it represents. I came to the State Legislature in 2003 after serving on the Manhattan City Commission and as Mayor of Manhattan between 1993 – 1997.

City governments operate under the Kansas Open Meetings Act (KOMA) and the Kansas Open Records Act (KORA) rules. The Manhattan City Commission operates under strict rules about voting on or promoting issues that have a direct financial benefit to the individual commissioner and I once was required to leave the room for even a discussion and vote involving naming a baseball field in my honor. An earlier city commissioner had been removed from her position on the commission because she voted on a contract that would have a direct benefit to her business. It was a terribly disruptive event in the community and something I have never forgotten as I represent my constituents.

The bill before you would be known as the state governmental ethics law. It gives authority to the Ethics commission to assess a civil fine, after proper notice and an opportunity to be heard, against any person for a violation of KSA 46-215 through 46-286.

Over the past 21 sessions I have witnessed many times that legislators bring bills to committees or the floor of the house that directly benefit themselves. The reason I bring this bill is that when I first checked to find out if we had a Conflict-of-Interest Statute, I was informed by the Ethics Commission that we do not. Therefore, No Kansas legislator has violated such a law. I have had to explain that to my constituents time and time again as they bring to my attention what they perceive as illegal representation of an issue.

Conflicts of Interests can be 'sticky wickets.' In representing the interests of those who send us here, we must balance our own personal interests, our constituencies' interests and the stewardship entrusted to us as Kansans so that all may enjoy its bounty. We bear a huge responsibility to the people of Kansas.

Mr. Chairman, and members, I ask you to give your most thoughtful consideration to the legislation before you and recommend it favorably for passage.

I will stand for questions.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Sydney Carlin".

Representative Sydney Carlin
House District 66