



Chair Erickson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Tanner Tempel with Americans for Prosperity, and I am here in strong support of **SB 419, the Kansas Intellectual Rights and Knowledge Act (KIRK Act)**, because it affirms and strengthens First Amendment protections and intellectual freedom for students and student associations at Kansas public postsecondary institutions.

Protecting the First Amendment on Campus

SB 419 ensures that expressive activities, including speech, protests, distribution of literature, guest speakers, and peaceful assembly, are broadly protected in outdoor areas of public college and university campuses. The bill explicitly states that these outdoor areas are public forums where free expression cannot be banned or limited to narrow “free speech zones.”

This is vital because campuses should be marketplaces of ideas, not places where viewpoints are regulated or restricted. The United States Supreme Court has made clear that colleges and universities have a unique role in fostering open debate, and SB 419 codifies that principle into Kansas law.

Preventing Discrimination Against Student Associations

Under current law, some student groups have experienced disparate treatment based on religious, political, or ideological beliefs. SB 419 amends Kansas statutes (K.S.A. 60-5311 through 60-5313) to prohibit public institutions from denying benefits, such as recognition, registration, facilities use, communication channels, and funding, to associations **based solely on their beliefs or missions.

This guarantees that all student organizations, whatever their viewpoints, have equal access to campus life and resources. It protects people’s right to organize, meet, and express shared values without fear of institutional discrimination.

Enforcing Rights Through a Civil Cause of Action

SB 419 provides that any student or student association whose free expression or association rights have been violated may bring a civil cause of action against the institution and seek remedies, including damages, court costs, and attorney’s fees.

This enforcement mechanism is essential because:

- It gives real legal teeth to the protections guaranteed in the bill.
- It deters future violations by holding institutions accountable.
- It empowers students to defend their own constitutional rights.

For all these reasons, I strongly support **SB 419, the Kansas Intellectual Rights and Knowledge Act**. It protects fundamental free speech rights, prevents discriminatory treatment of student groups, and gives students the tools they need to hold institutions accountable.

I urge the Committee to advance this bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tanner Tempel". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial 'T'.

Tanner Tempel
Americans for Prosperity Kansas