

February 3, 2025

SB 70, proponent, oral testimony

Chairman Warren and respected Committee members, good morning! I am here to discuss SB 70 and be a proponent of this Bill.

While I have never spoken at any hearings here in Topeka, I have spoken at least 23 times in front of the Johnson County Board of County Commissioners, the Prairie Village City Council, the Lenexa Planning Committee and the Lenexa City Council. I am pretty sure the Prairie Village City Council streams their public comments, I'm not sure about Lenexa, but I am CERTAIN the Johnson County BOCC does NOT stream their public comments.

If I'm not mistaken, the very first order of business by the current Chair, Mike Kelly, was to censor the public comments. He stops the meeting, asks the clerk who is in charge of live streaming to stop the streaming, and he asks her to let him know when the streaming is shut down so the public comments can begin. Once they conclude, he stops the meeting and waits for her to begin the live streaming for the remainder of the meeting.

These meetings take place every Thursday morning at 9:30. If you aren't there in person, you will never be able to see these public comments unless you are a member of the Johnson County Republican Party and are on Facebook. We often live stream the public comments or at the very least, some one video tapes the public comments and magically posts them for viewing later.

At the beginning of Chairman Mike Kelly's reign, we suspected he actually had some noise cancelling devices in the room because our public speakers **could not** be heard during our live streaming or on the video. A private citizen bought some special microphones we used, and passed from speaker to speaker, to make sure our voices were indeed heard. So, if you still work but always watch these meetings later to keep up with the BOCC, you will never know what is on the publics' mind. At virtually every meeting, one of the public speakers brings this topic up but it falls on deaf ears.

Mike Kelly is the king of his kingdom and answers to no one but the voters, who are largely uninformed. There is no one to "check" our BOCC, which is another very important topic, but not the subject of this Bill. Maybe someone could write a Bill that would address the need for checks and balances on County Commissions before they tax us to the point we have to move.

Please require public bodies—the county commission, school boards, city councils to name a few—to stream the entire meeting start to finish, to include all public comments.

Thank you for your time this morning!