

From: Charlotte O'Hara
15712 Windsor St
Overland Park, Ks

Testimony in support of SB 70, February 3, 2025
Re: Broadcast of Public Comments

Chairwoman Kellie Warren and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee, I am Charlotte O'Hara, a resident of Johnson County and former 3rd District County Commissioner.

For years Johnson County Board of County Commissioners broadcasted public comments along with the rest of the regular BOCC business, agenda review and Committee Of the Whole meetings. However, in January 2023 newly elected Chairman Mike Kelly issued an edict that public comments would no longer be broadcasted. The false narrative was this action was required due to the county's streaming service possible discontinuance because of "misinformation" contained in public comments.

The agenda item to censor the broadcast of public comments was passed 4-3, my vote was in the minority.

Since the censorship vote in January 2023, residents of Johnson County must go to great lengths to access what their neighbors are bringing to the attention of the BOCC either by personally attending or accessing the videos taken by volunteers at meetings.

Transparency in government is critical and the need is obvious for the Kansas Legislature to take action to protect the rights of all Kansans to be able to view the entirety of public meetings which are broadcasted.

I also ask this committee to:

1. Require public comments to on the agenda for every local government public business meeting.
2. Require public comment period to be at the beginning of the meeting. This is from the City of Olathe's format of city council meetings: General Issues and Concerns of Citizens - After the City Council completes the meeting agenda items above, citizens can address the City Council about other issues.

Local government serves the people and the people should not have to wait through an entire meeting in order to address their elected representatives.

Thank you and I stand for your questions.