



**Hearing on HB 2054
House Judiciary Committee
January 29, 2015**

WRITTEN ONLY

Good Afternoon Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee. I'm Kent Cornish, President of the Kansas Association of Broadcasters - a trade association representing the nearly 275 radio and television stations in Kansas.

I write in support of the "Public Speech Protection Act." This is also known as Anti-SLAPP legislation. SLAPP stands for Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation. It has passed in 29 states and the District of Columbia. That includes 3 of the states surrounding Kansas – Missouri, Oklahoma and Nebraska.

Citizen participation is the heart of our democracy. Whether petitioning the government, being interviewed for a traditional news story, or commenting on the quality of a business, the involvement of citizens in the exchange of ideas benefits our society. Yet frivolous lawsuits aimed at silencing those involved in these activities are becoming more common. These are no different than the bully on the playground.

These meritless lawsuits are brought for the purpose of harassing and intimidating those who wish to speak out on an issue of public interest. The bill provides for an expedited motion to dismiss procedure, when one is simply sued for what they say without there being a valid basis for the claim. When this happens, the fees are shifted so that the party who brought the case ends up paying the fees that were spent fighting the meritless claim. If the statements are false, defamation laws exist to protect and hold people accountable for what they say.

I ask that you approve HB 2054 because without laws like this in place, the bullies prevail, and the public stands to lose a tremendous tool for information and discourse.

Thank you for your time and I'd be pleased to answer questions at the appropriate time.

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