

A FREE STUDENT PRESS

It's is the law in Kansas

For more than two decades, a Kansas law has protected the journalism students at your school. Whether newspaper, yearbook, broadcast or online student journalists, their expression is protected — even “controversial” content.

We want to spread the word among administrators and board members. Some school officials have a false sense of what students can and cannot do in student publications. The Kansas legislature — both Republicans and Democrats — passed this law to provide students with the authentic experience of being a journalist without the fear of censorship.

Of course, this power of free expression for students also demands student responsibility. And the law is clear on that. We hope that you will take a moment and read our summary of the law below. Being informed of the law will prevent your school from unlawfully censoring student expression and instead encourage excellent, award-winning journalism.

THE KANSAS STUDENT PUBLICATIONS ACT

enacted 1992

“The liberty of the press in student publications shall be protected [...] Material shall not be suppressed solely because it involves political or controversial subject matter.”

That means . . .

Building administrators, school board members and district administrators cannot censor or determine content of student-run publications.

Students creating student publications at public schools “are responsible for determining the news, opinion, and advertising content” and therefore the students can be held liable civilly or criminally for what they publish.

Publication advisers are responsible for teaching and encouraging free expression. No adviser shall be terminated, transferred, or fired for refusing to infringe on student free expression conferred by this act.

Student publication expression is not expression from the school, school board, or school district.

However . . .

School employees may regulate the number, length, frequency, distribution, and format of student publications.

Review of a student publication for high standards of English and journalism is not a infringement of the right to free expression.

Not protected by this act?

- Content cannot be libel, slander, or obscenity.
- Content cannot promote criminal conduct.
- Content cannot include material that would otherwise be grounds for suspension or expulsion.
- Content cannot create material or substantial disruption of the normal school activity.

Kansas Scholastic Press Association
providing support and leadership in scholastic journalism
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