

HCS HB 1940 -- CRONKITE NEW VOICES ACT

SPONSOR: Corlew

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass with HCS" by the Standing Committee on Elementary and Secondary Education by a vote of 10 to 1. Voted "Do Pass" by the Rules- Administrative Oversight Committee by a vote of 13 to 0.

This bill establishes the "Cronkite New Voices Act," which provides that in both public high schools and public institutions of higher education a student journalist has the right to exercise freedom of speech and of the press in school-sponsored media.

The bill permits school districts and student-media advisors to regulate the number, length, frequency, and format of school-sponsored media. School districts must adopt a written freedom of the press policy that includes reasonable provisions for the time, place, and manner of student expression. The policy may also restrict speech that is offensive or threatening. District or student-media advisor review of school-sponsored media and encouragement of professional standards of English and journalism will not abridge the right to freedom of expression.

The bill forbids school districts from prior restraint of school-sponsored media except in circumstances specified in the bill.

This bill is similar to HB 441 (2017).

PROPONENTS: Supporters say that current law permits school administrators to unduly restrict student journalist expression. This bill grants additional protection to ensure student journalists are free to learn and practice responsible journalism.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Corlew; Missouri Press Association; Aaron Manfuw; Camille Baker; Isaiah Bryant; Missouri National Education Association; and Mitch Eden.

OPPONENTS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.