

HB 2317 -- CRONKITE NEW VOICES ACT

SPONSOR: Christofanelli

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass" by the Special Committee on Career Readiness by a vote of 7 to 0. Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Rules- Legislative Oversight by a vote of 10 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.

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

This bill is the same as HB 743 (2019) and HB 1940 (2018).

PROPONENTS: Supporters say that this bill will help protect first amendment rights for students. Public schools and Universities should not have to pre-approve subject matters or writings of school sponsored media. Students currently are censored or self censor protected press and this bill will further expand protected freedoms.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Christofanelli; Mark Maassen, Missouri Press Association; American Civil Liberties Union Missouri National Education Association; and Robert Bergland.

OPPONENTS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.