

HB 2058 -- CRONKITE NEW VOICES ACT

SPONSOR: Haahr

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass by Consent" by the Standing Committee on Emerging Issues by a vote of 9 to 0. Voted "Do Pass by Consent" by the Select Committee on Rules by a vote of 6 to 0.

This bill establishes the Cronkite New Voices Act and defines "school sponsored media," "student journalist," and "student media advisor."

The act provides that a student journalist has a right to exercise freedom of speech and of the press in school-sponsored media regardless of whether the media is supported financially by the school district or public institution of higher education, if the student uses school facilities in production of the media, or if the media is produced in conjunction with a class.

These provisions do not apply to content that is libelous or slanderous; constitutes an unwarranted invasion of privacy; violates federal or state law; or creates a clear and present danger of the commission of an unlawful act, the violation of school district policy, or the material and substantial disruption of the orderly operation of the school.

This bill does not prevent the teaching of professional standards of English and journalism to student journalists by a student media advisor.

This bill prohibits a school district from sanctioning a student operating as an independent journalist. The bill requires each school district to adopt a written student freedom of expression policy which must include reasonable provisions for the time, place, and manner of student expression. The policy may include restrictions on speech that may be defined as profane, harassing, threatening, or intimidating.

PROPOSERS: Supporters say that some of the most cutting edge journalism today is coming from student journalists. Often student journalists are the only people willing to address critical issues on their campuses. Allowing student journalists the same freedoms as professional journalists shows students that their voices matter. Students learn to be professional and to think critically.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Haahr; Robert Bergland; Mitch Eden; Meredith Wright; Thomas R. Hanrahan; Deborah Garner; Timothy Tai; Kathy Kuhlmeier Frey; Frank LaMonte, Student Press Law Center; Missouri Press Association; Gregory Porter, ACLU-Missouri;

and the Missouri Broadcasters Association.

OPPONENTS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.