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My name is Amber Versola. I am the president of the Kansas City Metro chapter of the National Organization for Women, and also a board member of Kansas NOW. On behalf of KS NOW, I respectfully stand before you as a proponent of SB 563.

KS NOW believes that this bill calls for the transparency of financial support that our elected officials receive. Specifically, it calls for the transparency in the funding of campaigns to retain or appoint our judges. Without this piece of legislation, Kansas faces a frightening future where judges can be bought. SB 563 will not allow any specific interest groups to hide behind campaigns that essentially bully justices who do not side with their agendas, whether those agendas are constitutional or not. This bill maintains that state officials, such as our Supreme Court Justices be accountable for the monies that such interest groups spend on their retention. It mandates that the groups also be accountable for their financial interests in the campaigns to retain or unseat justices.

A key example of why Kansas needs this legislation can be seen in the “Fire Beier” campaign that a well funded interest group has implemented. The group has bought television, print, and radio ads in an effort to get the people of our state to vote against the retention of Justice Beier in the next election. The group has demonstrated that they harbor animosity towards Justice Beier essentially because she did what she was appointed to do – she voted to uphold the law. In doing so, she issued a decision against specific conduct by former Johnson County District Attorney and former Kansas Attorney General Phil Kline.

Justice Carol Beier used factual reasoning when she wrote, "Kline exhibits little, if any, respect for the authority of this court or for his responsibility to it and to the rule of law it husbands. . . His attitude and behavior are inexcusable, particularly for someone who purports to be a professional prosecutor." She also asserted that his actions cost taxpayers \$50,000 in unnecessary personal costs.

It's because of her remarks that she has been politically attacked by some of the same zealots who aided Kline as he behaved in the manner which resulted in the justices' ruling. The same group that financially supported the attorney's campaigns have focused their money on a campaign that is aimed at removing Justice Beier from her seat.

Justice Beier was direct and assertive in her decision. Her interpretation of the laws which maintained that Phil Kline be held accountable for his approach to the court and its questions serves as a model for future courts. Ironically, it is her respect for the law that has positioned her at the center of a hateful campaign to remove her from the bench. It was found that Phil Kline

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acted with disrespect for the laws that hindered his personal agenda. Just as we did not deem his behavior as a prosecutor to be acceptable, we do not accept the fact that judges may have extra incentive to side with any special interest groups.

Kansans deserve to know the story behind the Fire Beier campaign. We also deserve to know that the judges, whether they face appointment, retention, or even election will not have their judgment clouded by the interest groups who fund such campaigns. We should not tolerate the notion that money talks in our courts. In keeping with the pursuit of justice, I would like to close my remarks by saying that KS NOW supports SB 563 because of the transparency it mandates. We firmly believe that it is time for groups to be accountable for the information they disseminate to our voters. Because of this, I ask that the committee please move SB 563 favorably out of committee and place it onto the Senate floor for a vote.