

Dorothy Barnett
Climate + Energy Project
SB 172
Written Opposition

Chairman Patton, Ranking member Carmichael and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to share my opposition to SB 172, a bill to criminalize peaceful protest, including extending RICO conspiracy statutes to organizations that support actions of protesters.

My name is Dorothy Barnett, I direct the Climate + Energy Project (CEP), a fourteen-year-old Kansas based nonprofit. CEP works to support the transition to a carbon free economy through programs and policy. Energy efficiency and renewable energy are not only good for our economy but good for our health and environment as well. Here in Kansas and across the nation, the clean energy economy is growing and according to evidence outlined in a recent report - [The Speed of the Energy Transition](https://www.weforum.org/whitepapers/the-speed-of-the-energy-transition),¹ we're clearly experiencing a rapid energy transition scenario to fight climate change.

Its clear, climate disruption is an impending humanitarian disaster, in Kansas and around the world. We know that our society has to move away from fossil fuels quickly if we're going to begin to address the threat of human-caused climate disruption. Despite this, our state has made no attempt to address this threat; rather, if this bill passes, the legislature will choose to criminalize activities that could help to call attention to the urgent need for climate action.

Additionally, this bill would treat my organization as if we were organized crime because we supported a peaceful march or rally.

Although the bill is presented as protecting against acts of terrorism and sabotage against infrastructure facilities, those acts are already illegal. The only criminal penalties this bill adds concern trespassing and "tampering with" facilities. This would definitely include - and is in fact intended to include - acts of peaceful protest, civil disobedience and direct action, such as the protests at Standing Rock in 2016. So, this bill does nothing more than criminalize free speech and provide punishments that do not fit the crime.

This bill is not about protecting infrastructure, rather it is designed to install fear in climate activists, so they don't go out and protest in the first place. Please say no to this bill and protect Kansans right to free speech and peaceful protests.

¹ <https://www.weforum.org/whitepapers/the-speed-of-the-energy-transition>