

The Honorable J. Kevin Stitt
Governor of Oklahoma
2300 N. Lincoln Blvd., Suite 212
Oklahoma City, OK 73105

Dear Governor Stitt:

The undersigned organizations, which represent a broad coalition across the political spectrum, thank you for vetoing House Bill 1236.

The Oklahoma Citizens Participation Act is one of the nation's best anti-SLAPP laws. HB 1236 would significantly weaken that law's protections for citizens faced with expensive and meritless lawsuits (known as SLAPPs, or Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation) aimed at silencing their speech.

The bill would remove current law's requirement that a speaker who successfully files an anti-SLAPP motion to dismiss a meritless case be awarded fees to recover litigation costs. This is a vital deterrent against SLAPP lawsuits. Without an award, a defendant might win the lawsuit, but still suffer financial devastation from costs owed to their lawyers.

Every state should follow Oklahoma's lead to reduce the punishment that unscrupulous litigants can mete out to their critics and adversaries. Automatic costs and attorney's fee awards do just that. Importantly, such fee-shifting also enables more attorneys to represent those with limited means fighting a SLAPP.

Thank you, Governor Stitt, for safeguarding the Oklahoma Citizens Participation Act that protects citizens' rights to speech, press, assembly, and petition.

Sincerely,

Institute for Free Speech

Joined by:

American Civil Liberties Union of Oklahoma	Motion Picture Association
Americans for Prosperity - Oklahoma	National Coalition Against Censorship
Authors Guild	National Taxpayers Union
Better Business Bureau serving Central Oklahoma	Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs
Better Business Bureau serving Eastern Oklahoma	OCPA Action
International Association of Better Business Bureaus	Oklahomans for Fairness
Center for Biological Diversity	Oklahomans For Life
Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression	People for Opportunity
James Madison Center for Free Speech	Public Participation Project
	Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press
	Society of Professional Journalists