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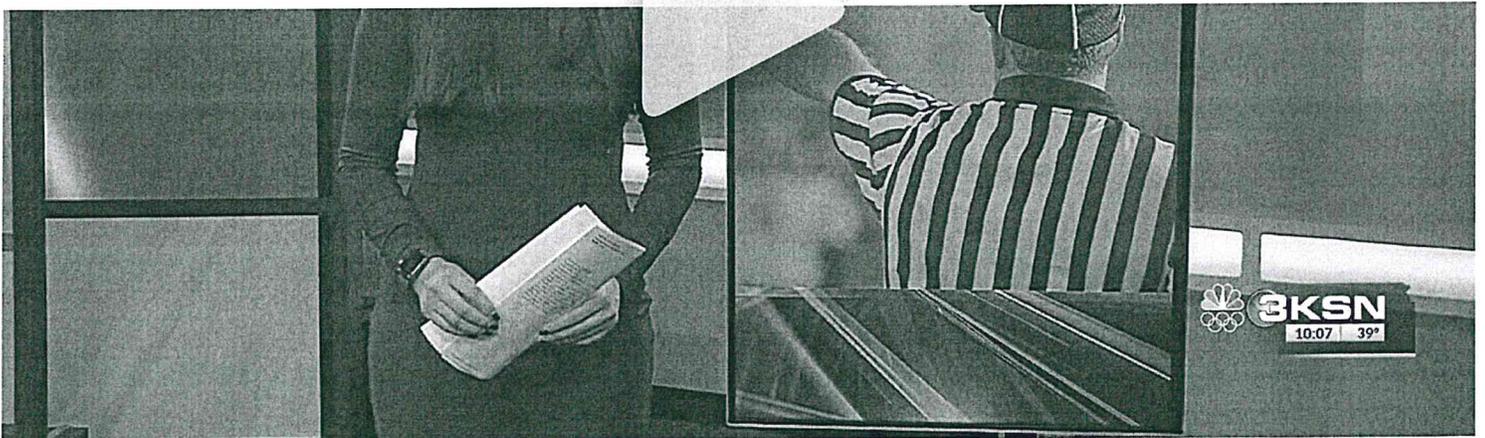
SB1034 Appendix E
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LOCAL

'It's kind of disappointing that we've come to this': Lawmakers discuss bill to increase penalties for assault against sports officials

Lawmakers discuss bill to protect sports officials

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by: Alexis Padilla

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WICHITA, Kan. (KSNW) – “It’s a game, and it should be a fun time, a fun event, and it’s kind of disappointing that we’ve come to this,” said referee Keith Kinley.

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“Some people take it so serious that it draws to physical activity or verbal altercation. It’s really disappointing at times,” said Kinley, board member of the Greater Wichita Officials Association.

Kansas lawmakers are discussing a bill, HB 2520, that would strengthen the penalties for assaulting a sports official. Their hope is to prevent incidents like the one in Augusta two years ago. When a former Wichita police captain pushed a teenage referee.

“There are some kids that are detoured because of some of the way the parents and the coaches and people act,” Kinley said.

Over the past 10 years, Kansas has seen a decline in sports officials. The shortage is leading to more close calls other than the ones on the field and court.

“We haven’t done it yet but we have come very close this year to canceling some games because of these behaviors,” said the referee.

Kinley says if passed this bill will especially be helpful during the off-season.

“If kids are going to get better and if officials are gonna get better that means we have to do some of the summer leagues, some of the travel ball, some of that stuff and in that situation, it’s not really as regulated,” he said.

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