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2025 Q1



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A Statement on Civility from The Chamber, Lawrence Board of Directors and Staff

As the Board of Directors and staff of The Chamber, Lawrence, we are deeply committed to fostering a thriving and inclusive community. Recently, the topic of civility in public service has been a matter of growing concern. We believe it is imperative to uphold respectful and constructive discourse, even when viewpoints differ.

Public service is a demanding and often thankless pursuit, undertaken by individuals who dedicate themselves to improving our community. While it is natural to disagree on policies and decisions, we must recognize that our government officials and public servants are motivated by a sincere desire to make Lawrence a better place for all. Unfortunately, a vocal minority has dominated public meetings—whether at the city commission, county commission, or school board—creating an environment so hostile that many now hesitate to participate.

Our local governing bodies have been forced to implement new rules regarding public comment, a reflection of the growing challenges in maintaining respectful discourse. We must remember that debate should center on ideas, not personal attacks. As a community, we can and must do better.

Civility means treating others with respect, even in disagreement. The complex issues facing our world and our community require diverse perspectives and collaborative solutions. We need dedicated public servants willing to step up for the collective good. Rather than deepening divides, let us strive to find common ground. We all share a vision for a strong, healthy, and prosperous community—let's work together to make it a reality. In trying times, be the one to lead with civility. Be the difference.

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This statement was written by Board of Directors member, Gina Meier-Hummel. Gina has dedicated 33 years to serving at-risk Kansas families, working in public child welfare and nonprofit management. She has held leadership roles, including Secretary for the Kansas Department of Children and Families, Commissioner for the Kansas Department of Aging and Disability Services, and Deputy Director for Victim Services for the Attorney General's office. Currently, she serves as the Executive Director of O'Connell Children's Shelter and is an Adjunct Professor of Social Work at Washburn University.

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