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SB 284 - Blind Information Access Act

Written-Only

Neutral

FROM:

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TO:

Senate Utilities Committee

Pursuant to section 38 of the 2023 omnibus bill, the State Library began a new contract with the National Federation of the Blind for an annual subscription to their Newslines product on January 1, 2024. As part of the FY 2025 budget request, the agency requested a budget enhancement to renew this contract for an additional year to ensure continuation of the service. SB 284 would fund the service and administrative costs associated with the service using the Kansas Universal Service Fund in subsequent years, as opposed to the State General Fund currently being used. According to Scott White, Director of Sponsored Technology Programs at the National Federation of the Blind, the 2025 Newslines annual subscription rate for Kansas will be \$30,500.

The current subscription is the second time the agency has been instructed to provide this service by the legislature. Pursuant to the 2007 omnibus bill, the agency subscribed to Newslines in FY 2008 until funding was disappropriated by the State Budget Office in FY 2010. The agency presumes the intent of the current legislation is to provide a funding source that would not be impacted by future State General Fund budget cuts.

The agency believes Newslines is a valuable addition to the library services it provides to the print disabled, in accordance with K.S.A. 75-2534(c). However, the agency submits this testimony as a neutral party in regard to the legislation itself.