



August 2, 2023

To: State Superintendent
Ryan Walters
2500 N Lincoln Blvd.
Oklahoma City, OK 73105

State Board Member
Kendra Wesson
2500 N Lincoln Blvd.
Oklahoma City, OK 73105

State Board Member
Sarah Lepak
2500 N Lincoln Blvd.
Oklahoma City, OK 73105

General Counsel
Bryan Cleveland
Oliver Hodge Building
2500 N Lincoln Blvd.
Oklahoma City, OK 73105

State Board Member
Suzanne Reynolds
2500 N Lincoln Blvd.
Oklahoma City, OK 73105

From: Veronica Laizure
National Lawyers Guild
Oklahoma Chapter
Executive Director
(918) 850-3696

Tamya Cox-Tourè
ACLU of Oklahoma
Executive Director
(405)525-3831

Re: The Role of Legal Observers

Greetings,

We write to you amid growing tensions during the Oklahoma State Board of Education Meetings and in response to Board Members' attempts to prevent Legal Observers from documenting and recording events during public meetings. We seek to inform you about the specific role Legal Observers play during public meetings and the legal protections they enjoy.

The National Lawyers Guild is an objective, non-partisan non-profit made up of lawyers and non-lawyers working for the protection of the democratic process and the advancement of human rights. Our Legal Observers are trained volunteers who monitor and document law enforcement and other public officers' interaction with people in Oklahoma who are participating in the democratic process by protesting, voting, or attending public meetings.

We collect and preserve evidence under the supervision of several local civil rights and public interest attorneys. We are only present upon request. In the case of public meetings, we are present at the request of an Oklahoman attending or making public comment. We wear specific clothing marking us as Legal Observers. During public meetings, we can be identified by our lime green hats or safety vests, reading "National Lawyers Guild Legal Observer." All volunteers with these pieces of identifying clothing have been trained as Legal Observers. Any other people present at public meetings are not associated with the National Lawyers Guild. We will be present in small groups of two to three volunteers, standing towards the back of meetings. We will not participate in public comment or advocate for or against any issue or agenda item before the Board. We will be wearing plain clothes that do not advocate for any issue or candidate. We will be clearly recording and documenting any law enforcement or public officer's interaction with the public to preserve evidence of any potential violation of constitutional rights.

Legal Observers are an accountability mechanism, and our presence is a deterrent for unlawful actions by law enforcement and other public officers. We provide a public safety service for participants by ensuring the truth is documented and encouraging lawful action.

We inform you of the specific role and visible identification of Legal Observers to ensure your offices and members are aware of and understand our role in advance of future Oklahoma State Board of Education Meetings, to avoid any confusion or misunderstanding during future public meetings, and to ensure we are treated in accordance with the law. **All members of the public, including**

Legal Observers, have the right to record public meetings, including Oklahoma State Department of Education Meetings, as long as they are not disruptive or interfering with the Board's ability to conduct the meeting. As attorneys or observers under the supervision of attorneys, their documentation of events, including but not limited to written notes, video, and photos, are privileged attorney work product and may not be confiscated or reviewed by any office other than their law offices, the law offices of their supervising attorneys, and organizations or individuals working with the supervising attorneys in the course of assessing and preparing potential litigation.

If you have any questions regarding the role of Legal Observers or the legal protections they enjoy, please contact Veronica Laizure at (918) 850-3696 or Tamyia Cox-Tourè at (405) 525-3831.

We thank you for your time and for your anticipated respect of the privileges of attorney work product and the rights of all citizens.

Sincerely,

Veronica Laizure
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Executive Director
(918) 850-3696

Tamyia Cox-Tourè
American Civil Liberties Union of Oklahoma
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(405) 525-3831