



# K A N S A S

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

KATHLEEN SEBELIUS, GOVERNOR

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Nicole Corcoran, Press Secretary  
785.368.8500

*The following is a column by Governor Kathleen Sebelius:*

## **Kansas finally bans protests at funerals**

Kansas is known for a lot of things – our history as a state devoted to freedom for all residents, great leaders like President Dwight Eisenhower, our leadership in agriculture and aviation and countless other achievements.

But in recent years our state also became known, sadly, as the home of a group of individuals who spread hate by protesting at funerals, particularly those of military personnel killed in Iraq and Afghanistan.

None of us can adequately express the gratitude we feel to the men and women who have made such immense sacrifices on behalf of our nation, as well as to their families. It's reprehensible anyone would try to disrupt the funeral of a fallen service member, or of any Kansan.

More than 30 states have passed laws restricting protests at funerals, yet Kansas wasn't one of them – until now.

I signed a ban on funeral protests into law during a ceremony at the State Capitol on April 12 surrounded by members of the Patriot Guard along with Brandy Sacco, whose husband Dominc died while serving our country.

The Patriot Guard has traveled around our state and nation providing a shield to mourners, and I want to thank them and their supporters for the comfort they've provided. These men and women have truly honored the sacrifices made by our military by blocking out the protesters who try to use the deaths of others to aggrandize themselves and their hate.

This new law will keep protesters away from funerals, with fines and jail time awaiting any violators. Additionally, families will be able to sue protesters who defame the deceased.

I know a big concern of many was that this law could be challenged in court and damages could be awarded to protesters if it were found to be unconstitutional. To avoid that, Attorney General Paul Morrison will take this law to the Kansas Supreme Court or a federal court to test its constitutionality before it takes effect.

I'm certain this ban on funeral protests will be found to be constitutional and will – finally – become the law of the land.

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