

# **Ignorance is no excuse in KOMA violation**

PATRICK HENRY ONCE SAID THAT LIBERTY IS NEVER SECURE AS LONG AS GOVERNMENT DOES BUSINESS IN SECRET.

*The Liberty Sentinel, January 2009*

(Montgomery Co. Chronicle -- Editorial) The public's business should be transacted in public.

That's the basis of a complaint lodge by this newspaper against the Montgomery County Commission recently --- one which was validated this week by the county attorney and admissions of wrong-doing admitted by the three commissioners.

The Kansas Open Meetings Act is to be taken seriously, not shrugged off as something reporters like to grouse about. It is a law that strikes at the very heart of openness in government. It is a plank in the front porch of democracy, and a privilege that should be reserved for lawful behind closed-doors discussions.

It gives the Montgomery County Chronicle no pleasure in seeing these public officials get in trouble for breaking this law, but we believe the complaint was necessary to make a point: The executive session is to be used sparingly, and only for specific reasons. Twice during the past several months, the commissioners were observed abusing the tenets of the Kansas Open Meetings Act and they should face the consequences of their oversight.

A point that should not be overlooked is the commission's refusal to attend training sessions offered by the Kansas Association of Counties. Participating in such seminars provides insight and knowledge into the laws pertaining to the proper handling of the public's business. Ignorance of the KOMA law is hardly an excuse for violating it.

If the result of this legal reprimand is that commissioners, present and future, end up studying, learning and observing the laws of public administration, then the complaint will have been worth the embarrassment and sanctions it has caused.

***Do you have an Open Government experience to share? E-mail it to [rgannon@kspress.com](mailto:rgannon@kspress.com)***