
Healthcare
Higher Education
Public Employees
PSRP
Teachers

35 Marshall Road
Rocky Hill, CT 06067
860/257-9782
Fax: 860/257-8214
Toll Free: 888/398-3373
www.aftct.org

Sharon Palmer
PRESIDENT

Melodie Peters
FIRST VICE PRESIDENT

Leo Canty
SECOND VICE PRESIDENT

Thomas Bruenn
SECRETARY-TREASURER

VICE PRESIDENTS

John Altieri
Ronda Barker
Erin Benham
Dennis Bogusky
Joanne Chapin
David Cicarella
Art Costa, Jr.
Tom Culley
Tanya Crump
Kathie Daly
Patti Fusco
Betty Gadson
Andrea Johnson
Patrica M. Keavney
Phyllis Kornfeld
Paul Krell
Ann Lohrand
Jean Morningstar
Chuck Morrell
Harry Rodriguez
Kathleen Sanner
Rick Tanasi

Testimony of

Jennifer Berigan, Lobbyist

American Federation of Teachers

Task Force to Study Converting Legislative Documents From Paper to Electronic Form

November 18, 2010

It's customary for those who do not understand the role of a lobbyist to think of them as shadowy figures who malevolently manipulate the legislative process on behalf of evil special interests. But in truth, lobbyists represent regular citizens. For example, I represent teachers, paraprofessionals, nurses and healthcare workers. They share common interests and employ me as their representative because they either cannot or are unable to navigate the legislative process on their own.

In many ways, lobbyists are the bridge between the General Assembly and citizens. We deliver information, communicate concerns and facilitate dialog between legislators and the people we represent. But not every citizen or every organization has the ability to engage a lobbyist and it is for this reason that I submit testimony today. I urge the task force to maintain the printing of daily documents so that every citizen will have the ability to advocate for himself or herself at the State Capitol.

The recommendations made by this task force will no doubt impact the way lobbyists do business. That much is relatively certain, but I am reasonably confident that we will find a way to continue doing our jobs. What is not certain is that interested constituents will be afforded access to the inner workings of the General Assembly. I am concerned that what is already an inside game, will become even more insular, diminishing an interested citizen's ability to understand and have confidence in the legitimacy of the process.

While I agree that all information should be housed on the General Assembly's website, the simple truth is that does not happen. Documents are not posted in a timely fashion, especially during the last weeks of session. Without printed bills, substitute language and file copies, members of the public will have no way of understanding what is happening before their eyes. The task force's assumption that committee staff will readily print documents upon request is also troubling. Staff is already stretched thin with diminishing ranks and oversized agendas.



By cutting daily documents from its budget, Legislative Management seems to already have made its decision. I urge this committee to consider the money-saving suggestions made by the Connecticut Lobbyists Association. We could reformat documents, print fewer copies and amend printing schedules for some publications. Legislative Management could also save funds in other areas that do not impact public access to information, such as establishing electronic stationary and reducing the number of seldom used statute books that are published.

I urge you to recommend that Legislative Management restore funding for printing daily documents in a new, cost-effective manner so that the legislative process will continue to be transparent and accessible to the general public.

Thank you.