

TO: Senator Joseph Crisco, Co-Chair  
Beverley Henry, Co-Chair  
Task Force to Study Converting Legislative Documents from Paper to  
Electronic Form

FROM: Brooks Campion, President  
Association of Connecticut Lobbyists

DATE: October 22, 2010

RE: Preliminary Recommendations

Thank you for giving members of the Task Force the opportunity to offer preliminary recommendations to assist in the challenging transition associated with converting legislative documents from paper to electronic form. While each member of the Association of Connecticut Lobbyists ("ACL") likely has a different opinion from the next, we offer these recommendations from a diverse cross section of our membership as a starting point.

From the outset I want to reiterate that the ACL is fully committed to your mission to promote access to and transparency of the legislative process for the wider public. Similarly, we support the goal of saving state resources and reducing unnecessary paper consumption. We also recognize that the budget expenditures for the daily printing of legislative documents and public hearing transcripts has been eliminated. The legislative process and the functions of government in general can be alienating and mysterious even to the most seasoned lobbying professional. That's why our recommendations are designed to make changes that save money while maintaining the essential information that the wider public requires in order to be able to navigate the system.

Given those considerations, we believe the priority for the Task Force's recommendations must be to apply financial and technological resources only to items that enhance or promote public access and transparency. Our recommendations are as follows:

- 1) Do not completely eliminate the printing of daily documents. Instead, print less, format them differently so the printing is less costly and increase cost sharing as appropriate

- The sheer volume of documents printed is excessive. We recommend that the current recipients of the document be canvassed to enable Legislative Management to reassess the volume of documents to be printed.
- The content of the Legislative Bulletin is too dense and should be pared down so it contains only what the public needs to know for that day. Committee assignments and contact information, printed early in the session, should be made available at the League of Women Voters locations, the Bill Information Room and at the Security Guards' posts only, as well as the listing of legislators sorted by town.
- It'd also be worthwhile to consider printing the calendars of the House and Senate only on session days. In truth, watching bills advance on the calendar is an "inside baseball" game and doesn't serve the wider public on non-session days.

2) Develop alternative strategies to enable public hearings to continue to be transcribed, as there's great variance in the comprehensiveness of JF reports. Oral testimony is often overlooked in the absence of written testimony in JF reports and the days of legislative intent colloquies are few and far between, especially in the Senate

3) Enable the Legislative Office of Information Technology Services to upgrade its bandwidth and whatever infrastructure is necessary to accommodate increased website traffic and WI-FI consumption on site.

- Improve wiring to accommodate increased public demand for computer, PDA usage at the State Capitol Complex
- Install dedicated printers in either the Public Information Room located in a vault in the basement of the State Capitol or in the House and Senate Clerks' Offices so legislative amendments can be made available to the public in real time. It is our understanding that the Legislative Commissioners' Office now sends amendments straight to each caucus' amendments desk within each chamber. Because there is a considerable time delay in amendments being posted online and made available in hard copy, due to staffing constraints, this proposal would save staff resources and improve the public's access.

- Revise the Joint Rules to allow for electronic devices to be used in both chambers; the Senate currently prohibits the use of electronic devices of any kind in the Senate gallery.
- 4) Improve staff training and encourage consistency among legislative committees in the public hearing process and in the provision of substitute language.
- In an effort to improve the public's timely access to information and to reduce paper consumption, we recommend that committee staff be required to scan in all substitute language adopted by the committee immediately upon the conclusion of the committee meeting. Optimally, substitute language (exclusive of verbal amendments offered on the floor of the committee) would be made available prior to the start of the meeting so those in the "viewing" audience could follow along but we recognize that is the prerogative of the committee chairs. At present, each committee's practice is different, substitute language is often not filed online and it takes weeks before the wider public is aware of how dramatically a bill they're following is changes through the release of the file copy. We believe leveling the playing field with respect to consistent committee practices could improve the transparency of the General Assembly's activities.

Our overarching concern is that in the context of an overall "printing" line item within the budget of the Office of Legislative Management of \$2,124,973 for FY '11, the elimination of \$410,000 for the printing of daily documents versus a meager \$20,000 for all other items runs counter to the mission of public access and transparency. For example, within the over \$2 million printing budget, nearly a half a million dollars is allocated toward the printing of statutes, many of whose bindings are never cracked here in the Legislative Office Building; nearly \$5,000 is allocated for the Legislative Record Index which serves virtually no one; \$86,000 is spent on stationary. At a time when the "outside" world generates letterhead electronically, there's no reason why the Legislative Office of Information Technology Services ("OITS") couldn't create a set of uniform computer-generated templates. Finally, \$3,300 is allocated for the printing of Rules and Precedents, all of which could be easily posted on line for speedy reference.

We look forward to an opportunity to discuss each of these recommendations in greater detail at the next scheduled meeting on October 26<sup>th</sup>. Again, thank you for the opportunity to offer our recommendations.

Cc: Members of the Association of Connecticut Lobbyists