

To: Members of the Task Force to Study Converting Legislative Documents from Paper to Electronic Format  
From: Carter Kneeland, Principal, Ethical Influence LLC  
Date: November 11, 2010

Dear Task Force Members:

Please accept this written statement as my testimony on the elimination of printed legislative documents for the public. As a member of the public who follows legislation closely that impacts my industry, ethics reform, I am greatly alarmed by the idea of a wholesale conversion from paper to electronic format and oppose this change.

These are certainly difficult budgetary times. I believe everyone supports the need to save precious dollars. However, I would argue that the move to an "all electronic format" for legislative documents will reduce government transparency.

Technology is a useful tool but it is by no means perfect. There have been many occasions in which the legislative website has been unavailable, sometimes for days. If the public will only be able to access legislative documents via the website, this will be unacceptable. There have also been numerous occasions when the legislature has been voting on bills or amendments and the text of those bills has not been available online. An example of this was the very important clean elections bill passed this August. Members of the General Assembly were debating the bill and yet the language for the bill was unavailable online.

The public understands that cuts need to be made. The solution lies, perhaps, in reducing the numbers of copies or in reformatting the documents to reduce waste. Perhaps cost sharing arrangements can be made with high users of printed documents or an evaluation can be made of the printing contracts in order to achieve the needed savings. Funding could also be restored for printed documents from savings acquired by the legislature's reduction of sessional staff after JF deadlines, as was achieved in 2010.

Ultimately, members of the public, particularly those who are not familiar with the process, must have access to the legislature and its procedures. Increasing the ways in which the public accesses information, rather than restricting it, is the key to government transparency. I would urge the Task Force to request that Legislative Management restore funding to the printing of paper documents.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of this very important issue.



Carter Kneeland  
Principal

