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**Testimony  
Frank Chiaramonte  
First Selectman  
Town of Harwinton  
Government Administration & Elections Committee  
Legislative Office Building  
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My name is Frank Chiaramonte, First Selectman of the Town of Harwinton. I'm also a member of the Connecticut Council of Small Towns (COST).

I would like to take this opportunity to comment on **SB-772, An Act Concerning the Freedom of Information Act**. Although we recognize that the law requiring towns to post minutes and agendas on town websites is well-intentioned, it has imposed some burdens on small towns that have proven difficult in this economic climate.

Small towns rely heavily on volunteers to record minutes of meetings, type those minutes and send them to a municipal employee for posting the information on the town's Web site, many of which lack the staff to constantly update their websites. In many small towns, volunteers also maintain the web sites. Asking the volunteers to type up the minutes of a meeting, which are often taken in longhand, and to then also put the minutes online, all within seven days, is too much to ask. Rather than risk being penalized for not complying with state law, Harwinton shut down its site to give us the opportunity to put the mechanisms in place needed to comply with the law.

Unfortunately, the law is very unclear as to what would be considered a violation of the law. If the person responsible for posting documents to the website is unavailable or the website itself is down due to technical difficulties, is the town in violation of the law? These questions could not be sufficiently answered and towns are uncertain as to whether they have the resources to comply with the law.

Although Harwinton has been working with a vendor to develop a program that aids in sorting minutes from agendas and in assigning a date to the item, which will help us comply with the new law, it has taken staff time and resources that could have been devoted to other needs. We therefore support efforts to **repeal this law to give towns some relief from unfunded mandates** that, combined with shrinking revenues and increased costs, are placing a crushing burden on Connecticut's towns and cities.

Towns have been working to increase transparency and provide greater governmental access to its citizens, but this can be accomplished by assisting towns with technical issues and resources rather than unfunded mandates.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.