

**FREEDOM OF INFORMATION COMMISSION STATEMENT
IN OPPOSITION TO SB 986, AN ACT PROHIBITING THE DISCLOSURE OF
A POLICE OFFICER'S ADDRESS ON A TOWN'S GRAND LIST.**

The stated purpose of SB 986 – to prohibit the publishing of the name and residential address of a police officer on a town's grand list – is troubling and problematical.

In Section (d) of the bill is the following language which creates a new, mandatory exemption from disclosure for public records: **No assessor or board of assessors shall disclose or publish on the grand list the name and residential address of a sworn member of a municipal police department or a sworn member of the Division of State Police within the Department of Public Safety.**

The Freedom of Information (FOI) Commission understands the security concerns associated with the release of the name and residential address of a police officer. Such security concerns initially led to the enactment of section 1-217 of the General Statutes, which permits public agencies to redact the residential addresses of clearly defined groups of certain "at risk" public employees, including police officers.

However, to require an assessor and board of assessors to redact from grand lists the names of police officers would lead to absurd consequences and bizarre results. The Connecticut Supreme Court has long recognized that property and tax lists must be complete and accurate and available for public inspection. Rocky Hill Incorporated District v. Hartford Rayon Corp., 122 Conn. 392, 403 (1937); The Boston Turnpike Co. v. The Town of Pomfret, 20 Conn. 590 (1850). The names and addresses of the individuals whose properties comprise grand lists are both necessary and integral to the completeness and accuracy of the lists, as well as to the reasons why they are publicly available. Grand lists are, in significant part, available to the public in order for an individual to ascertain whether an injustice has been done and, if so, to appeal to the board for relief.

In addition, this requirement would impose an unending duty of inquiry on an assessor and board of assessors to determine who falls within the protected class. Grand lists do not identify individuals as belonging to a protected class or who no longer falls within the protected class. An assessor and board of assessors would have to make a determination based on who they believe are members of the protected class. Acting on the basis of such ad hoc knowledge would result in records that are inaccurate, incomplete and inaccessible for public inspection.

It sets a dangerous precedent. If the names and residential addresses of this protected class are redacted from grand lists, why not the names and residential addresses of individuals within other protected classes, such as judges, prosecutors, public defenders, firefighters, and employees with the Department of Corrections? Ultimately, redacting any protected class from grand lists would not only result in inaccurate and incomplete records, but it would destroy the integrity of important public records.

For the above reasons, this bill should not be acted upon favorably.

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