



# State of Connecticut

## SENATE

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### Testimony Re: SB 772 AAC The Freedom Of Information Act

Senator Slossberg, Representative Spallone and members of the Government Administration & Elections Committee, I would like to offer my support for *SB 772, AAC The Freedom Of Information Act*.

I should begin by saying that, while I believe this bill is a step in the right direction, I would much rather exempt small town governments from the provisions of *PA 08-3, AAC Comprehensive Ethics Reform* that require public agencies to place their minutes and agenda meetings online within a certain period of time. My proposed legislation, *SB 87, AAC Concerning Notice of Municipal Meetings*, would exempt municipalities with a population of 30,000 or less from the requirement of posting notices and minutes on their municipal websites.

The municipalities I represent rely heavily on volunteers to serve on local government boards and committees. What that means is that many of the people who actually help run our local governments work at their paying jobs all day - and then take time away from their families at night to serve our towns. It is not fair to further burden these volunteers by requiring them to post minutes and agendas as quickly as state law requires.

I appreciate the fact that this proposed legislation calls for giving towns extra time to become compliant with the new state law requiring them to quickly post their agendas and minutes online. I know that both the volunteers and local elected officials in the towns I represent also appreciate this gesture, and I know they will do their best to comply.

However, the reality is that the towns in my district will still be relying on volunteer boards and committees to help run local government when this legislation takes effect in October. Towns that cannot afford to pay people to post minutes and agendas online

now are not going to find the money to hire them anytime soon. The bottom line is that imposing a requirement on towns to post minutes and agendas online within a certain period of time is just another unfunded mandate. Requiring towns that cannot comply by October 1, 2009 to demonstrate a hardship to the state Freedom of Information Commission is both unfair and, yes, still another unfunded mandate.

In closing, I support SB 772 if passing this bill is really the best the General Assembly is willing to do for small towns that rely on volunteers to run their governments. But, the right thing to do is to simply repeal the online posting requirement for small towns. Otherwise, some towns will simply find it less onerous to close down their municipal websites, and that would be an unfortunate loss to the townspeople who use them.