

Testimony from the Connecticut Council on Freedom of Information

On Raised Bill No. 104 AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE STATE CIVIC NETWORK.

Government, Administration and Elections Committee Feb. 22, 2016

Sen. Cassano, Rep. Jutila, Sen. MacLachlan, Rep. Smith, Committee Members.

I am James H. Smith, president of the nonprofit CCFOI, which has been coming before you for 61 years to support open government.

This bill, which would greatly expand the scope and reach of what we have known as CT-N, is quite simply a win-win for everyone.

We don't see a downside.

CT-N now can cover only two events at a time at the Legislative Office Building. It has done well for nearly two decades in bringing those who govern us into our living rooms.

With this legislation, the citizenry of Connecticut will be afforded a much greater look into the workings of our state government – legislative, judicial and executive. We will be able to watch arguments before the Supreme Court, criminal trials in the Superior Court, the meetings of administrative agencies, and of course, the deliberations of the House and Senate.

What a wonderful thing for a democracy.

There really is no down side. It will position the new State Civic Network to participate as an active player in how information is delivered to the people as technologies change. As a separate Cable TV channel much like C-SPAN, the cost to the public is minimal. Seeing government work and knowing first-hand how it operates can only be a benefit to a democratic society.

And think, you will be able to grab clips, sound bites, whole speeches of you at work and show them to your grandchildren.

Please pass this bill. Thank you.