

**STATEMENT OF THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION COMMISSION ON
RAISED SENATE BILL 104, AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE STATE CIVIC
NETWORK**

February 19, 2016

The Freedom of Information Commission supports Raised Senate Bill 104, An Act Establishing the State Civic Network.

Raised Senate Bill 104 establishes the State Civic Network which will provide the public with greater access to the workings of its government. The State Civic Network will be managed by an independent, non-profit, organization funded by cable subscribers, rather than by the state, thus saving millions of dollars of public funds. SB 104 requires that the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority (“PURA”) will issue a Request for Proposal, and assign responsibility, for managing the State Civic Network for a ten year period, based on specified criteria, including experience, operating plans, budget and other relevant factors. The bill provides that every ten years, PURA will revisit the management of the State Civic Network. PURA shall also establish the amount the Network will receive from cable customers on an annual basis.

Specifically, SB 104 envisions that not only legislative meetings, hearings and sessions will be broadcast, but also arguments before the Supreme and lower courts, executive agency hearings and meetings, election coverage, and other civic programming. Television and internet coverage will be available live, and also will be archived for future viewing on-line through streaming. Therefore, Connecticut citizens will have greater opportunities to view more public events on a multitude of platforms.

Access to government information is the key way for the public to know what its government is doing. The Freedom of Information Commission is particularly committed to increasing government transparency and encouraging citizen engagement. Using modern technology and all of its associated tools, in the manner envisioned by this bill, would achieve these goals. The new State Civic Network will bring the workings of government into people’s homes and onto the personal computers, televisions, and other mobile devices of Connecticut citizens in a most productive, timely and professional manner.

The passage of this bill will do much to increase government transparency today and for Connecticut citizens of the future. The bill contemplates that government, in this case, PURA, will act as overseer of the State Civic Network, since it will determine funding and can determine which non-profit will act as the manager of the network; yet the increased government transparency will be accomplished without the need for further public funding.

The Freedom of Information Commission supports this pro-transparency, cost-saving bill, and urges the passage of SB 104.

For further information contact: Colleen M. Murphy, Executive Director and General Counsel or Mary Schwind, Managing Director and Associate General Counsel at (860) 566-5682.