

**Vermont Press Association**  
c/o Journalism Department  
St. Michael's College  
Colchester, Vt. 05439-0284  
(802) 654-2442  
[mdonoghue@smcvt.edu](mailto:mdonoghue@smcvt.edu)

Feb. 15, 2016.

To: Honorable members of the Senate Government Operations Committee.  
Re: S.184 Creating a State Ethics Commission

Dear Senators:

The Vermont Press Association, which represents the interests of the 11 daily and nearly four dozen non-daily newspapers circulating in Vermont, supports the creation of a State Ethics Commission as proposed in S.184.

We believe the public has a right to know the truth that its elected and appointed officials are acting entirely in the best interests of their constituents. The provisions in the bill which require disclosure of an individual's holdings and financial relationships will help the public understand whether elected and appointed officials are influenced by factors other than the public good.

Further, we believe the scope of the commission's work should be expanded to include other state and local officials. Over the past several years there have been innumerable examples of local officials who have violated the public trust in favor of personal gain. Too often, such misconduct either goes unrecognized or unpunished for the lack of a credible third party to oversee and evaluate that conduct.

The proposed legislation falls short by only encouraging towns to "do something". (See attached story from the Vermont Standard about selectmen in Barnard paying themselves about \$500,000 in recent years for town work.) Many towns have failed to adopt employee handbooks and policies, including policies related to purchasing.

Finally, we stand ready to work with your committee and the legislature as you move forward on the bill. We are pleased to assume our share of responsibility as a member of the State Ethics Commission.

We applaud Sen. Pollina for taking on this important issue and we thank the committee for taking up and passing this bill.

Thank you for considering our thoughts.

John Flowers  
Senior Reporter  
Addison Independent  
President, Vermont Press Association  
(802) 388-4944  
[johnf@addisonindependent.com](mailto:johnf@addisonindependent.com)