

Government Operations Committee Bill to  
Guarantee Collective Bargaining in the State's  
Attorneys' Offices

- This bill simply allows the staff in the State's Attorneys' offices to be treated like any other state employee: to be able to vote, in a free and fair election, by secret ballot, on whether they want to be represented by a collective bargaining representative—and on which collective bargaining representative they want to represent them.
  
- This bill clarifies their status as state employees for health insurance and retirement benefits they have already been receiving.
  
- The bill provides the right for frontline staff like victim advocates and secretaries to bargain for just cause employment protection, so that they can't be arbitrarily dismissed without a justifiable reason.

**Sarah F. George**  
State's Attorney

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**STATE OF VERMONT**  
**OFFICE OF THE CHITTENDEN COUNTY STATE'S ATTORNEY**

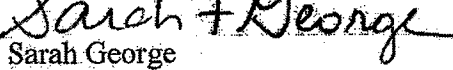
March 14, 2017

The Honorable Jeanette K. White  
115 State Street  
Montpelier, Vermont  
05633

Dear Ms. White:

Senator, I write today to express my support of the right of employees of the State's Attorneys' Offices throughout the State to vote by secret ballot as to whether they want to be represented by a union and negotiate over pay, benefits, and—for advocates and secretaries—just cause rights. This common sense change would bring the hardworking employees of these offices in line with every other state employee in the state, and allow them to make their own choices as to whether they want to be represented in collective bargaining by a union. On fundamental issues like pay and benefits, these crucially important workers should have the right to make decisions on representation themselves. I appreciate the work of you and your committee on this tremendously important issue.

Sincerely,

  
Sarah George  
State's Attorney, Chittenden County

cc:

The Honorable Brian Collamore  
The Honorable Claire Ayer  
The Honorable Alison Clarkson  
The Honorable Christopher A. Pearson

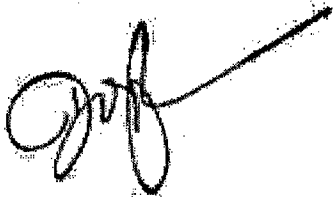
Dear Steve and Tom,

I was able to have a conversation with our Dept.'s Executive Director John Campbell yesterday afternoon, and I made my own position on collective bargaining and the department's employees known. As you know, I was a classified employee from 2006 to 2012 when I worked for the Vermont Judiciary. It is my understanding that not every State's Attorney in Vermont shares my position on collective bargaining, and I respect their positions. Given the short notice, I am unable to attend this afternoon's hearing, so I apologize in advance. But given the weather forecast, perhaps the hearing won't take place? Perhaps at a later date I would be available to come to Montpelier. However, feel free to submit this email in its entirety to the Senate Government Operations Committee.

During my conversation with our Executive Director, I did tell him that I would support both the Grand Isle County Administrative Assistant position (32 hours) and Grand Isle County Victim Advocate position (20 hours) in becoming classified, as I feel the individuals in these positions should have protections in place and a peace of mind that a newly elected State's Attorney would not be able to come in and just let them go without cause. These two positions are the only two in my office in North Hero. When I was running for the office of the Grand Isle County State's Attorney, several residents approached me and advised that the Grand Isle County State's Attorney's Administrative Assistant was very concerned as to what would happen to her if a new SA was elected. She was just over a year shy of being able to retire. When I was elected on November 4, 2015, the very next morning I called this 18+ year Admin. Asst. at the office to tell her that her job was secure. I cannot describe how appreciative she was of that phone call; she is presently still the Grand Isle County Administrative Assistant (although she will be retiring this year at some point).

Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance.

In solidarity,



**Douglas E. DiSabito, Esq.**  
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“My name is Naomi Roche and I am a victim advocate in the Rutland County State’s Attorney’s Office, and have been so for 5 years. I support and assist victims of crime that range from murder, sexual assault to property crimes and physical assaults. The role victim advocates have all over the state is vital to bridge the many gaps and assist individuals whose lives have been upheaved by crime. I am, thankfully, supported by a wonderful office and State’s Attorney in Rutland County who all take their responsibilities to protect the public very seriously.

**As an employee who serves the public, I support legislation that gives Victim Advocates and others the right to collectively bargain for wages, benefits and just cause protections.** Just cause would give me the stability and expectation of my job status when there are political changes and funding changes. Additionally, there are benefits that are open to other state employees, such as tuition reimbursement that because of the murky waters of our current legislation, I am unable to access in my current position.”

— *Naomi Roche, Victim Advocate, Rutland County*

\* \* \*

“We are writing to you as the two victim advocates at the Windsor County State’s Attorney’s Office. **We would like to formally offer our support for legislation that would give us the right to collectively bargain with management over wages, benefits and just cause.** This is a bill that we support in its entirety, including the provision for just cause protection. We are both fortunate enough to work in a county where we feel secure and supported by our State’s Attorney, but we understand that this is not necessarily the case for all of our colleagues.

**We agree with VSEA’s assertion that Victim Advocates and Administrative Staff are front line employees and not an arm of the State’s Attorneys’ political agenda. As such, it is our belief that these employees should be protected from political staffing decisions.** When a new State’s Attorney is elected to office, and makes changes to prosecutorial policy, these changes have little effect on the way administrative staff and victim advocates do their jobs.