

Dear Maida,

Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak on the Ethics Bill (S-8).

The Vermont Press Association has not taken a formal stance on the latest version. It has been suggested that with no consensus there is no position the VPA can offer at this time on all the various points so it may make sense for the House Government Operations Committee to use any time provided to the VPA instead go to other witnesses.

Is there something special you or the committee is wondering about that we might be able to focus on?

The VPA weighed in under the original draft a year or so ago. I believe our position was that we certainly favored open and transparent government when it applies to state and local government. I can try to find our statement that was filed.

I'm not sure there is anything the VPA could add at this point until the board has time to meet and reflect on it. The VPA has been busy on other legislation, including ensuring First Amendment protections for High School and College students (S-18), the Shield Law protection, trying to ensure state-mandated public notices remain printed in newspapers and on their websites (and not on little known or still to be developed websites.)

The VPA President has said I could speak as a private citizen or based on my long journalism career, but I am not sure that is what you and the committee are seeking.

Please let me know if I can help. Good luck with the bill.

A special thanks to you and the committee for your ongoing work on keeping government open.

Mike Donoghue

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