

To: Senate Committee on Government Operations

Please consider this email and the attachment for submission for the record concerning H.910 and H.700.

My comments are based in part on my observations of the Committee's discussions on Thursday 4/12/18 and Friday 4/20/18.

I encourage the Committee not to adopt Section 2 of H.910.\*

I understand the problems that occurred in local government in Montpelier that prompted this section. I do not think those problems were serious enough or widespread enough to warrant new language in state law. Not every problem warrants attention in state law. State law should be reserved for big problems. Citizens will lose respect for state law if it becomes overly complex and burdensome, or is constantly changing, in attempts to solve every small problem. Some problems are better left to local government, or to the voters, as Senator Pearson noted on 4/12.

If the Committee does adopt this section, I support the view stated on 4/12 that the language should be adopted as is, and not modified, given the substantial amount of time that was spent crafting this language in the House Committee on Government Operations.

H.700 was mentioned briefly on 4/12. The selectboard of the town of Cambridge passed a resolution concerning H.700 which I have attached for your consideration. This resolution supports the original language in H.700 (five business days for posting minutes).

I fully support the testimony regarding H.700 submitted to your Committee on 3/27/18 by Martin Langeveld of Vernon. Mr. Langeveld, with experience in both media and local government, stated the case for easing the time period for posting minutes more eloquently than I can. His proposal of seven calendar days would be a good solution.

I understand that the intent of H.910 Section 2 and H.700, as both are currently drafted, is to strengthen local democracy. The effect will be the opposite. Local democracy depends on citizen participation in official government roles. Much of that participation is volunteer or part-time for nominal pay. Overly complex or burdensome state law will not only reduce the general level of respect for state law as noted above, it will also reduce the willingness of citizens to participate in official roles in their local governments.

Respectfully,

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\*Section 2 of H.910 proposes to add the following language to the open meeting law:

**“A quorum of the members of a public body shall not use a series of less-than-a-quorum communications of any kind, directly or through intermediaries, intended by any of the members to reach agreement or take action on the business of the public body.”**