



To: Chair Matthew Birong, House Committee on Government Operations & Military Affairs
Cc: Members of the House Committee on Government Operations & Military Affairs
From: Wendy Mays, Executive Director, Vermont Association of Broadcasters
Date: January 21, 2026
Re: Vermont Public Records Act Committee Discussion

The Vermont Association of Broadcasters is opposed to proposed changes to the Vermont Public Records Act (VT PRA) being advanced by the Vermont League of Cities & Towns (VLCT) and now before your committee.

Our first concern is the proposed significant increase to response time from three business days to fourteen business days. Fourteen days is an excessive amount of time to reply to a public records request. We urge your committee to ask VLCT for quantitative data that shows the number of public records requests towns and cities are not able to reply to within three business days. Keyword search software is a widely available and cost-effective tool that cities and towns can use to prepare records for public inspection and we urge your committee to ask VLCT to justify why they are proposing an eleven day increase in response time.

The second concern we have is VLCT's proposal to expand the costs municipalities can charge for collecting, inspecting and redacting all public records. Not only is this proposal too broad, it puts a financial burden on Vermonters who are not abusing the system for no justifiable reason. Again, we urge your committee to ask VLCT to provide quantifiable data about exactly how many towns or cities are experiencing hefty budget overages due to public records requests, exactly how much are the overages, does it happen every year and if so, why are annual budgets not being adjusted accordingly. If it is only happening in a few towns or cities occasionally by a very small number of citizens, then making drastic changes to VT PRA, which impacts all Vermonters, is not defensible. The costs associated with preparing records for public inspection is part of the cost of living in a democracy. And if too many complex exemptions to public records exist so that only attorneys can prepare them for public inspection, then either municipalities should plan accordingly or Vermont's 261 exemptions should be re-examined and simplified.

If the real goal is to provide relief for the small number of municipalities that are experiencing repeated abuse of the system by a small number of abusers, then the vexatious requests amendment may be prudent, as long as a vexatious request is narrowly and clearly defined.

Thank you for considering the Vermont Association of Broadcasters' request for VLCT to provide quantifiable data to your committee before making any drastic or unjustifiable changes to VT PRA.