

Dear members of the House Legislative Administration Committee,

I have been a resident of the town of Merrimack for over 30 years and I have been active in a variety of municipal volunteer positions.

I have read HB 314: Prohibiting the use of federal, state, or local funds for lobby activities.

I ask you to please deem this bill INEXPEDIENT TO LEGISLATE because it privileges privately-funded (that is, corporate) lobbying efforts and criminalizes lobbying efforts by municipal and other employees (such as teachers or others affiliated with schools and towns.)

We already have the current law RSA 15:5. What is wrong with that? Why is it not enough?

Local leaders should not be barred from (or prosecuted or terminated for) testifying about legislation with local impacts. Indeed, many times, these are exactly the people who understand the situation deeply and can provide important information.

Also, **how could this realistically be enforced?** Here are some examples that come to mind based on my experience.

1. Let's say I'm on a town energy committee and I work for free (as a volunteer) except I get paid mileage whenever I drive to any kind of meeting – not just ones to testify at the statehouse. But I go and testify in support of HB692- Relative to utility companies adoption advanced meters. If I do that, I will be found guilty of a Class A misdemeanor and fined? Fined what? It says “up to 3 times the amount wrongfully paid or expended” -- so up to 3 times the cost of the mileage it took to get me to concord? And I can be dismissed? By whom? I'm a volunteer!
2. The principal of the Academy for Science and Design Charter School, (which receives some state and federal money) testifies in opposition to HB 283, which would have removed Engineering and technology, and computer science from any NH school curricula. She's an expert! She's the principal of the #1 high school in the state! But it would be illegal for her to testify? And then how would you fine her? Up to 3x what? The feds don't pay her salary! How are you going to calculate the time out of her work? The school does not pay her any kind of mileage.
3. I introduce a warrant article in my town, which the townspeople vote on and pass. (In real life, I have done this several times.) What if some of the townspeople don't like the outcome? Is this grounds for a lawsuit? Is it considered legal harassment arguing that the vote was paid for by public money—or even the stationery and postage used to send the letter from the town to the Governor – was publicly funded? Could I be charged with a Class A misdemeanor? Or would the town be charged? OR every person who voted on the warrant – in support or in opposition? So – can you see how this bill can fundamentally disrupt the democratic processes that townspeople have used for years to have local input??

This legislation will have a chilling effect on all activities by town or school officials. It will fundamentally degrade the type and amount of information that the legislature needs to make informed decisions. Therefore, **I ask you to please deem this bill INEXPEDIENT TO LEGISLATE.**

Thank you,

Mary Elizabeth Raven, Ph.D.

9 Four Winds Rd

Merrimack, NH

603-620-0670