

John Gallam

From: John Gallam <gallam@att.net>
Sent: Wednesday, January 6, 2016 10:54 PM
To: DOA Public Records Board Comments
Subject: Electronic Records

Members of the Board,

In our view that your decision of last summer to alter the language of the policy governing access to the electronic communications of public employees was terribly mistaken, for it poses a significant danger to open government.

Let us presume for a moment good intentions all around. Removing any public document or communication, however seemingly or allegedly unimportant, from possible review by the public or by the press removes puzzle pieces from the picture of state governance. And who is to say that a given exchange is insignificant? The mere fact of a communication between parties may turn out to have great significance beyond its content. Surely the lawyers among you are aware of this.

But even if one discounts the argument for archiving all electronic communications on the grounds that anyone charged with "weeding" them might fail to recognize their importance, it should be clear that permitting officials to remove from possible scrutiny any item they "identify" as "transitory" opens the door to significant abuse. Such a policy obviously creates a ready made category ideal for covering up corruption at worst, and special interests at best.

And although one might have made a plausible argument in the old "paper age" for discarding "transitory" communications as taking up limited space archival space, no such argument can be made in this, the era of micro electronic storage.

If any issue in the current climate ought to be non-partisan, it should be this one. The new policy created last summer can be used by both parties as a means of rendering government opaque. Please, in the interest of open government, in the interest of an "open society", rescind it.

Sincerely,

John and Claire Gallam
2919 S. Herman St.
Milwaukee, WI 53207

Sent from [Mail](#) for Windows 10