

Jennifer Pfaff

From: Jennifer Pfaff <jenpfaff76@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, January 6, 2016 10:50 PM
To: DOA Public Records Board Comments
Subject: Public comment on state open records "transitory electronic records"

Mr. Blessing and the members of the State Public Records Board:

Wisconsin has long had some of the best sunshine laws in the country. These are a source of pride for its residents and the foundation of citizen engagement with and oversight of the government that sits in service to those residents.

The redefinition of "transitory electronic records" by the State Public Records Board darkens the future of open government in Wisconsin. I wholeheartedly ask you to rescind those changes made in August, and to ensure that any and all proposed changes to Wisconsin's open meetings and open records policies be widely publicized well in advance of any action on the matter. Public input must be sought and considered before changes to these most-important pieces of legislation are made.

In regard to the transitory electronic communications language, I assert that the intent of open records legislation is to ensure the public's access to government documents and communications. It is not the form of the communication that matters, but who was involved in that communication, in what capacity the communication took place and what the communication pertains to. It doesn't matter if it is an old-fashioned memo, email, text or Facebook post, if the communication involved a government representative or employee conducting public business, it belongs in the public domain. Wisconsin's open records law has several well-thought-out exemptions, and there is no reason electronic communications require additional exemptions.

Further, it is not possible to know what communication may in the future be relevant to someone. Even the most banal emails may at some point help paint the larger picture of government in a way that **could not have been predicted.**

I understand that changing technology has presented challenges to the recording, storing and cataloging of communications. But this isn't a reason to weaken the rights of Wisconsin residents. It is, rather, a compelling reason to search for ways to close the gap between technology development and policy-making in a way that preserves every resident's rights.

Do what is right for the people of Wisconsin: Rescind the changes made in August and work to strengthen the public's right to know.

Sincerely,

Jennifer M. Pfaff
Milwaukee, Wisconsin