

Scott Peterson

From: Scott Peterson <scott.peterson@jmg.com>
Sent: Wednesday, January 6, 2016 9:24 AM
To: DOA Public Records Board Comments
Subject: Texts are public records

Wisconsin's reputation for generally clean, open and honest government has its foundation in transparency, the belief that the best governing is visible for all to see. Collectively, we own the government. We created it, we fund it and we choose the people who will run it on our behalf.

How is it possible then, that the idea of concealing of discussions by the people we chose, or their proxies, is even an option being considered?

Certainly modern technology affords us the luxury of communicating in a multitude of ways. It's a luxury no other era has enjoyed. But these new tools are not a license to circumvent the fundamental premise the Badger State was built upon.

The people of Wisconsin formed this state under the belief that we had a better way, that we were committed to high ideals, and that a government by the people, for the people and of the people was paramount.

The Wisconsin Open Meetings and Open Records statutes codified that belief by making it clear that in order for our government to maintain this moral high ground, these are the rules that must be maintained to meet those standards at a minimum.

The spirit of these laws transcend today's technology. These new tools do not usurp the intent. No different than phone calls, emails, letters or discussions in remote, smoke-filled rooms would be exempt from the scrutiny by us, the owners, of our government, text messages need to face the light of day.

They need to be preserved so that we know what influences the decisions of our lawmakers and know when, as owners, we might need to take action to preserve and protect the State of Wisconsin.

The Public Records Board should not undermine one of the pillars of Wisconsin government, openness. Texts and other transitory records should be open, if for no other reason, than to make sure they are not used as the back door to circumvent the will of the people. Text messages are public records. We need to ensure that does not change.

Scott Peterson

Editor-in-Chief

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scott.peterson@jmg.com 1-262-446-6630

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