



ILLINOIS REFORM COMMISSION

Thursday, February 5, 2009

Transparency Comments from Website and Other Sources

As of Tuesday, February 3, the Illinois Reform Commission has received 780 comments, through www.reformillinoisnow.org. We have also received 87 comments via fax, phone, and regular mail. These comments have ranged from offers of volunteer service, to suggestions for reform, to personal testimony about how corruption has affected lives of Illinoisans.

Approximately 10% of the comments we have received touch on transparency in government. These comments expressed frustration with the way that information about elections, candidates, state business and legislation is currently provided to Illinoisans. A number of commenters believe that campaigns could be immediately improved by providing donor information to the public:

“Make all political contributions available on the internet quickly **in a searchable and understandable format.**” —Crest Hill, 1/26

“There is a clear need for transparency, including full disclosure (**updated monthly on the illinois.gov website**) of: campaign contributions, . . . state and city contracts awarded (naming executives), state and city jobs appointed/awarded (disclosing relations).” —Chicago, 1/07

Others looked for disclosure in public procurement and state finance:

“Have Illinois develop a website similar to Virginia DOT ‘Dashboard’ that **shows projects, contracts, change orders and schedules.**” —Chicago, 1/05

“Make all state contracts (everything from office supplies, to highway contracts, to contractual staffing, etc.) or contract summaries, **easy to search and find on the Internet**” —Springfield, 1/30

“The Illinois State budget should be transparent to the point where it will be on an Internet site **showing all income from sources and all expenditures to sources.**” —Schaumburg, 1/21

Commenters also expressed frustration with hidden legislative processes:

“There should be a web site where citizens can go to read reports and opinions about what is happening in our state government in layman’s terms. This website should have a place for feedback and questions from the public where we can voice our opinion in real time rather than waiting until after the fact when it is too late. **All bills brought before the assembly should be so transparent, that the average citizen immediately knows why the law is being created and who really benefits and why.**” —Bismark, 1/17

“We need an easy way to contact our elected officials. . . **It is difficult to find out what they are working on in the Congress and Senate.**” —New Lenox, 1/31

Still others had specific suggestions for implementation:

“End much of the need for FOIA, and speed up public scrutiny, by **requiring all senior public officials and their assistants to post online** - each business day - **a list of all calls and meetings** they held the prior day, and identify the subject, unless legal privilege is properly claimed.” —Orland Park, 1/06

“I would like to see **the business** (budgetary, and important council/committee meetings) **of the State televised both live and recorded similar to C-SPAN's programs.** This will certainly aid in transparency for the public and alleviate some of the back-room politics and keep corruption down to a minimum” —Chicago, 1/22

“[Forget] governments about their lousy websites! The new rally cry to governments is: **Publish DATA, not websites!** We’ll do the websites ourselves, thanks!” —Chicago, 1/23

Finally, commenters focused on how the lack of transparency can affect Illinoisan’s choices and how distributing information enables the public to become involved in the fight for reform:

“We need to **distribute accurate facts to the public** so they can make good decisions on candidates, not spin from Party or media (one and the same).” —West Chicago, 1/18

“I also believe that it would be essential to **let people know how much more our government could provide if corruption was not such an integral part of our legislature.** Critical to citizens' continued watchfulness and action would be a website and various news outlets providing such information.” —Prospect Heights, 1/22