



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 21, 2008

Dear Members:

The House General Investigating Committee will meet tomorrow apparently behind closed doors, and no House member other than those who are on the committee will be permitted to attend. Secret meetings blind the public to the workings of their government. We object in the strongest possible terms to sinister "star chamber" proceedings that deny public access.

At the present, no one has pointed out any House rule or law that may have been violated by any House member. In fact, the oversight Chair and the Speaker's General Counsel have indicated no rules or laws were violated.

For decades, House employment practices have been routine, open and subject to specific oversight from the Speaker's Office, the Committee on House Administration and the House Business Office. It is clear that Speaker Craddick is attempting to manufacture scandal and a cloud over the House, and has no interest in addressing any needed clarification in House rules and procedures. What is clear is the Speaker intends on damaging the institution of the Texas House in an attempt to deflect from his own actions. Unfortunately, this is par for the course.

The public should have faith in the integrity of their government. If there are now uncertainties about House employment practices, even though the uncertainties were raised for political purposes, then those issues should be addressed immediately.

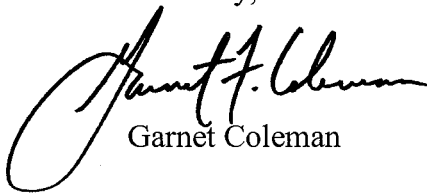
We have each routinely been involved in the major ethics bills filed over the last several sessions, and our votes in favor of more openness and transparency in State government over the years speak for themselves. The goal should be clarification of **all** employment practices. Members who have relied for years on advice from the House Business Office and oversight from House Administration and the Speaker's office should not be subjected to sudden interpretation changes and ambiguities, particularly those that are politically motivated. The institution is more important than any political gain. In addition, the rules should be tightened and clarified to address the issue of benefits. If there is a need for action, then that action should be real solutions and clarification, and not a political witch-hunt conducted behind closed doors. As such, we would submit the following proposed changes for House rules and applicable law.

1. No employee shall be eligible for Full-Time benefits during a month unless they are designated Full-Time and work Full-Time for that entire month.
2. No member of the elected class (i.e. elected and former elected officials and others designated as such) shall be eligible for retirement accrual within that retirement class (this would apply to all State agencies) unless they are then holding a State elected position.
3. House Personnel Action Request forms should be modified to provide a box for on-call employees. On-call employees shall be considered Part-Time for benefits purposes.
4. Overtime, vacation and sick leave will be accounted for on a monthly basis and reported to the House Business Office
5. No Full-Time employees shall be permitted any outside employment (this would be similar to the rule in effect for the U.S. Congress).

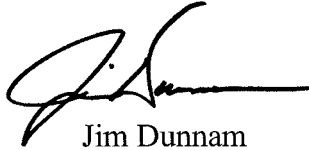
The above are suggestions that are given as a general framework and as a starting point, and would require both rule and statute changes. We would be interested in other constructive suggestions.

This matter should be resolved openly and not behind a closed door, and it should be resolved immediately. Since we are not in session at the present time, these changes should be submitted to each member for their signature and voluntary compliance until we can convene in general or special session to address these changes.

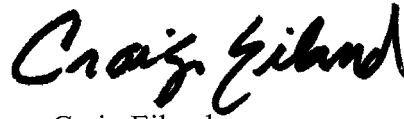
Sincerely,



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