



Citizens for 1 Greater New Orleans

Let your voice be heard in rebuilding the Greater New Orleans Area


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The Lafayette Advertiser

House needs to amend disclosure bill

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Volunteerism is one of the most powerful forces in a community. Each day, people give of their time and energy to better the lives of the disadvantaged, provide a more productive future for our children, help the elderly and the disabled and work in scores of other ways to make this a better community in which to live. They work for better government through citizen advisory groups and for greater prosperity through business-development organizations such as the chamber of commerce. They work through civic and social clubs, alumni associations, parent-teacher organizations and the programs of their churches.

Among the most valuable volunteer activity is work performed by citizens on state government boards and commissions. Now, a bill before the Legislature could vastly reduce the number of people involved in such work.

In the push for ethics reform, financial-disclosure requirements intended for elected officials were extended to volunteer board and commission members. This was a mistake. It could cost the state valuable service from dedicated citizens who serve only to fulfill personal commitments.

Asking citizens with no political aspirations to disclose financial information unrelated to potential conflicts of interest could cause many qualified citizens to decline invitations to serve on such bodies.

There is widespread concern about Senate Bill 718, which would impose the transparency rules. A leader in the effort to change the bill is **Citizens for 1 Greater New Orleans**, a government-watchdog agency, which is urging citizens to e-mail the House of Representatives asking that the bill be altered. The organization wants all language added to SB 718 on May 28 by the amendment of state Sen. Joe McPherson removed.

This will allow citizen volunteers serving on boards and commissions to be subject to less-stringent disclosure requirements, which was the original intent of SB 718.

The current session of the Legislature has proven to be very productive, and is achieving goals that will improve the national perception of Louisiana. There are these little things, however, that seem to sneak in to sessions. Besides the call for applying disclosure regulations for elected officials to volunteers, there is a measure that would force public-spirited private citizens speaking out on legislation because of personal concerns to register as lobbyists.

On SB 718, quick citizen action is necessary. The e-mail messages outlined by **Citizens for 1 Greater New Orleans** should be sent at once.

You also may urge passage of Senate Bill 499, which would return the definition of "lobbyist" to its original form - one whose primary paid job is influencing government.

We all have a stake in what happens in the Legislature. Stay abreast of the action and make your views known.