



## National Freedom of Information Coalition

**Kenneth F. Bunting**  
Executive Director, NFOIC  
Director, Freedom of Information Center  
Missouri School of Journalism  
101E Reynolds Journalism Institute  
Columbia, MO 65211  
Phone: 573.882.3075

Lucy Dalglish, President  
Reporters Committee for  
Freedom of the Press  
Executive Director

Peter Scheer, Vice President  
California First Amendment  
Coalition  
Executive Director

Katherine Garner, Secretary  
KLGarner Consulting

Mal Leary, Treasurer  
Maine Freedom of Information  
Coalition  
President

Frank Gibson, Director &  
Past President  
Tennessee Press Association  
Public Policy Director

Mark Horvit, Director  
Executive Director  
Investigative Reporters and  
Editors

Don Lindley, Director  
The Durango Herald  
Managing Editor

Sarah Nordgren, Director  
The Associated Press  
Director, Content Development  
and Alliances

Mitch Pearlman, Ex-officio  
Director  
Connecticut FOI Commission  
Executive Director Emeritus

Barbara A. Petersen, Director &  
Past President  
Florida First Amendment  
Foundation  
President

Hyde Post, Director & Past  
President  
News Distribution Network  
Vice President, Strategy  
Georgia First Amendment  
Foundation  
President

Thomas M. Susman, Director  
Governmental Affairs Office  
Director  
American Bar Association

June 15, 2012

The Honorable Lincoln D. Chafee  
Office of the Governor  
82 Smith Street  
Providence, RI 02903

RE: 12-H 7555 Substitute A

Dear Gov. Chafee:

I'm writing to urge that you sign into law 12-H 7555 Substitute A – “An Act Relating to Public Records – Access to Public Records.”

While the bill as amended and finally passed does not contain all of the reforms sought by our allies and our state and regional affiliates, there is no doubt that these needed changes will bring about greater accountability and more transparency for the citizens of Rhode Island.

The important principle that the written and recorded instruments of government belong to the people, not to the government itself, is one at the heart of democratic self-government. The important reforms in this bill will help to ensure that the principle of open, transparent government is more than a platitude in the state of Rhode Island.

The balancing test regarding public versus private information in personnel records mirrors that in the federal Freedom of Information Act, as well as language established by statute and case law in many other states. Similar balancing schemes have been in place for many years in Arkansas, Wisconsin, Connecticut and New Hampshire without giving rise to a spate of lawsuits or superfluous bureaucratic confusion.

The National Freedom of Information Coalition (NFOIC) is a nonpartisan network of state open government groups and advocates dedicated to protecting the public's right to know and citizens' rights of access to the records and meetings of governmental entities at all levels.

Our member organizations, the New England First Amendment Coalition (NEFAC) and ACCESS-RI, and other good-government and open-government advocates in your state, worked collaboratively with legislators to craft a bill that guarantees the public's right to know what their government does to and for

them, without creating inefficiencies or sacrificing Rhode Islanders' concerns about privacy.

On behalf of our board of directors, I urge you to sign the bill into law. Thank you for your consideration. If I can provide more information or clarification, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Ken Bunting", written in a cursive style.

Kenneth F. Bunting