



FIRST AMENDMENT FOUNDATION

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February 25, 2011

The Honorable H. Marlene O'Toole
The Florida House of Representatives
222 The Capitol
402 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1300

RE: House Bill 31 Office of the Chief Technology Officer

Dear Representative O'Toole:

We are writing to you regarding House Bill 31, which creates the Office of the Chief Technology Officer and further consolidates state agency data centers. As you are aware, Floridians have a constitutional right of access to public records under Article I, s. 24 of the State Constitution. During the last 20 years, not enough attention was paid to the impact of computerization on this constitutional right, often resulting in impediments to public record access and increased copying costs. If record access issues had been thoroughly vetted by agencies during the design phases, public access and transparency could have been greatly improved by computerization.

We think that ensuring access to public records is a very important component of the consolidation of agency data centers and we think that that the time to consider access issues is early in the consolidation process. We encourage you to consider amending the bill to require the creation of uniform data formats across agencies; mandating the creation of data fields that can easily be coded to reflect whether the information in that field is exempt or confidential and exempt; and to consider what types of data should be made available through the Internet. Consideration of these issues at this stage will not only improve government efficiency and effectiveness but will help to facilitate access to public records, as well.

Please do not hesitate to contact us as we would be happy to meet with you or your staff to discuss our recommendations.

Very truly yours,

Barbara A. Petersen, President