

LATE TESTIMONY

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HB2457

JUD

Thursday, February 2, 2012

2:00 p.m.

Room 329

COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY
Rep. Gilbert S.C. Keith-Agaran, Chair
Rep. Karl Rhoads, Vice Chair

February 2, 2012

Re: HB2457—Relating to exemption under Ethics Code re charitable events

In Opposition

Dear Rep. Keith-Agaran, Rep. Karl Rhoads, and members of the Committee:

This bill opens a hole the size of a barn door in the gift law. Let me give an example.

If passed into law, a non-profit organization could then gift a state legislator or state employee with a first-class airplane ticket to Vegas to attend a charitable event as long as they don't lay on a golf game.

Requiring disclosure is nice, but what is being disclosed if the gift is made within the law? The point of the gift law is to restrict influence. Disclosure simply documents that influence.

Clearly, changing the law as this bill suggests would permit endless abuses.

Further, it contains no definition of "widely attended." Would an event be "widely attended" if 25 state legislators attended?

Each year 501(c)3 organizations submit Grant-in-Aid applications that the Legislature must consider and decide upon. Should HB2457 become law, legislators who are charged with approving or disapproving these applications would become conflicted had they accepted tickets to lavish events from the same charities in the past.

Larry Geller