

**Are you for or against the various proposed changes to GRAMA?**

In many businesses, customer service is an important key to its success. Most businesses realize that the customer is the "boss". Likewise, our government has customers called voters and they decide who should serve them. Utah Lawmakers may feel that they provide a great service, but if they do not listen to the voters, then the voters will look for others to serve them.

A few months ago, the Party Lines topic dealt with a few proposed amendments in changing public access to government records, better known as GRAMA. Since then, we have seen several more bills relating to GRAMA with one bill already passed and signed by the governor, HB258. This bill will keep the Blackberry cell numbers of government officials private and allows these numbers to be non-records. Taxpayers, however, are paying for those "private" cell numbers at \$250,000 a year.

Another bill, HB12, will restrict public access to a legislator's e-mail correspondence. Every Davis County Representative from the House, all Republicans, has voted for these two bills. In addition, these Representatives are also favoring other bills amending GRAMA.

Clearly our representatives favor secrecy and are unconcerned to how the public feels. Such contempt for voters obviously shows they know more than the citizens of Utah do. Obviously, they have forgotten who put them in the legislature.

This desire for secrecy is a growing trend among elected Republicans. Not only do they want to restrict public access to government records, they also believe there is nothing wrong with meeting behind closed doors. In contrast, there are states in this country who have taken a different approach to secrecy in government. Unlike Utah, Tennessee and Vermont have passed legislation to open more meetings and more state records to the public. Clearly, the lawmakers in these two states are aware that they are public servants and feel that government should be transparent.

Secrecy in government is a dangerous trend in our society and it does nothing more than create a breeding ground for corruption. With a balanced and open government, Utahns can be assured of fair representation that would help everyone and not the self-serving lawmakers who hide behind closed doors. With lawmakers wanting to restrict public access to records, it is time to replace those secretive lawmakers with open-minded people who are willing to listen. President Harry Truman said it best, "Once a government is committed to the principle of silencing the voice of opposition, it has only one way to go, and that is down the path of increasingly repressive measures, until it becomes a source of terror to all its citizens and creates a country where everyone lives in fear."

As Chair of the Davis County Democrats, I pledge to the voters of Davis County, that our candidates will always promote an open and transparent government. In addition, they will not close any door to the public or the press because every citizen should know what their lawmakers are doing.

Richard Watson

Chair, Davis County Democrats