

THE ILLUSION OF ACCOUNTABILITY

by Justin H. Kirkland, Jeffrey J. Harden

with Travis Hill (script) John DeLuca (line) Alex Araiza (color) Darick Ritter (creative director) in



STATE CAPITOL BUILDING, NOW.

I HOPE I'M NOT TOO LATE!

WAIT!

CAN YOU OPEN THE DOOR?

SORRY, CLOSED SESSION.

ISN'T THIS THE COMMITTEE MEETING ON THE FRACKING BILL?

IT IS, BUT WE CAN'T GO IN THERE.

THE OPEN MEETINGS REQUIREMENT ENDED THIS YEAR.

I WANTED TO SEE IF MY REPRESENTATIVE WAS REALLY FIGHTING THESE GAS COMPANIES.

WE SHOULD GET TO KNOW WHAT THEY'RE TALKING ABOUT!

POLITICIANS DON'T SEE IT THAT WAY.

THEY DECIDED IT WAS TOO HARD TO NEGOTIATE IF WE KNEW EVERYTHING THEY SAID.

I WAS PLANNING TO WRITE A STORY ABOUT IT.

YOU CAN STILL WATCH THE FLOOR VOTES FROM THE GALLERY.

BUT THAT JUST TELLS ME THEIR FINAL CHOICES! I WANT TO KNOW WHAT MY REPRESENTATIVE SAID DURING THE NEGOTIATIONS.

THAT SEEMS UNFAIR TO THE VOTERS.

IT'S SUPPOSED TO MAKE COMPROMISE EASIER.

HE WANTS TO TELL YOU ABOUT THAT LATER, IN A PRESS RELEASE

AND HE WOULDN'T BE THE FIRST POLITICIAN TO SPIN THE STORY.

AND HAS IT?

NOT REALLY. IT'S THE SAME PARTISAN POLITICS.

THE U.S. CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION. PHILADELPHIA, 1787.

NOTHING SPOKEN WILL BE PRINTED, OR OTHERWISE PUBLISHED.

A NECESSARY PRECAUTION TO PREVENT MISREPRESENTATION OR MISTAKES.

I THINK THE PUBLIC NEVER OUGHT TO SEE ANYTHING BUT THE FINAL REPORT.

THE LEGISLATURES IN COLONIAL AMERICA USUALLY MET IN SECRET.

AND THE DELEGATES TO THE CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION TOOK DRASTIC MEASURES TO MAINTAIN SECURITY.

THEY WANTED THE FREEDOM TO CHANGE THEIR MINDS ON ISSUES.

YOU'D THINK PEOPLE WOULD BE UPSET BY ALL THIS SECRECY.

OH, THEY WERE.

PATRICK HENRY WAS A MAJOR OPPONENT OF THE CONSTITUTION AND ITS SECRECY.

HE EVEN DENOUNCED THE PLANS FOR CONGRESS FOR FAILING TO GIVE THE PUBLIC ACCESS.

"THE LIBERTIES OF A PEOPLE NEVER WERE, NOR EVER WILL BE, SECURE, WHEN TRANSACTIONS OF THEIR RULERS MAY BE CONCEALED FROM THEM."

DID THAT CHANGE ANYTHING?

WELL, THE STATE RATIFYING CONVENTIONS WERE PUBLIC.

AND SLOWLY OVER TIME, STATE GOVERNMENTS BEGAN TO EXPERIMENT WITH TRANSPARENCY.

ILLINOIS STATE CAPITOL, 1820.

SESSION CLOSED

EVENTUALLY THEY REQUIRED A SUPERMAJORITY VOTE, WHICH IMPROVED TRANSPARENCY.

WHAT ABOUT OTHER STATES?

TRANSPARENCY WASN'T A PRIORITY FOR A LONG TIME. IT TURNS OUT, THEY NEEDED A LITTLE PUSH.

THE FIRST STATE CONSTITUTIONS OF ILLINOIS AND OHIO REQUIRED OPEN LEGISLATURES.

BUT MEMBERS COULD EASILY SUSPEND THIS RULE WITH A SIMPLE MAJORITY VOTE.

THE BULLPEN OF THE NEW YORK
PM DAILY NEWSPAPER, 1947.

NEWSPAPER EDITORS WANTED MORE
ACCESS TO GOVERNMENT MEETINGS.

WHO'S YOUR SOURCE FOR THAT QUOTE?

A HIGH-RANKING STAFFER. BUT
IT'S OFF THE RECORD AGAIN.

I AM TIRED OF RELYING ON
THESE ANONYMOUS SOURCES!



THEY HIRED A JOURNALISM
PROFESSOR AND LAWYER, HAROLD CROSS,
TO STUDY ACCESS TO GOVERNMENT.

HE PUBLISHED A BOOK, WHICH
HELPED START A MOVEMENT TOWARD
TRANSPARENCY ACROSS THE UNITED
STATES, INCLUDING OPEN MEETINGS LAWS.



THE LEGISLATION THAT
STATES PASSED EMPHASIZED
CITIZEN CONTROL OF THEIR
GOVERNMENTS THROUGH
OPEN INFORMATION.



AN ACT to require certain meetings
to require notice and the keeping of r
to provide for invalidation of govern
provide penalties; and to repeal certa

ISN'T THE GOVERNMENT
REQUIRED TO MAKE THEIR
MEETINGS OPEN?

NOT CONGRESS. MAYBE A
FEW STATE GOVERNMENTS.

WE NEED TO
LEARN MORE!



WHY WOULD THE GOVERNMENT BEND
TO THE WILL OF NEWSPAPER EDITORS?

THEY WERE GOOD AT ARGUING THAT
A DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT SHOULD
BE AVAILABLE TO THE PEOPLE.



UNFORTUNATELY, LEGISLATORS' DECISIONS
AND CHOICES DIDN'T REALLY CHANGE.

IT FEELS LIKE A BIG ILLUSION.



WELL, THE LAWS ARE REAL AND
STATES ENFORCE THEM. THEY ONLY
SEEM LIKE AN ILLUSION BECAUSE
OF WHO ACTUALLY USES THEM.

A FEW YEARS AGO.

THIS IS A COMMITTEE MEETING ON A HOUSING DEVELOPMENT BILL FROM SEVERAL SESSIONS BACK.

THERE I AM IN THE CORNER.

YOU LOOK SEVERELY UNDER DRESSED.

EVERYONE IN A SUIT IS A LOBBYIST. EACH REPRESENTING VARIOUS PARTS OF THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY.

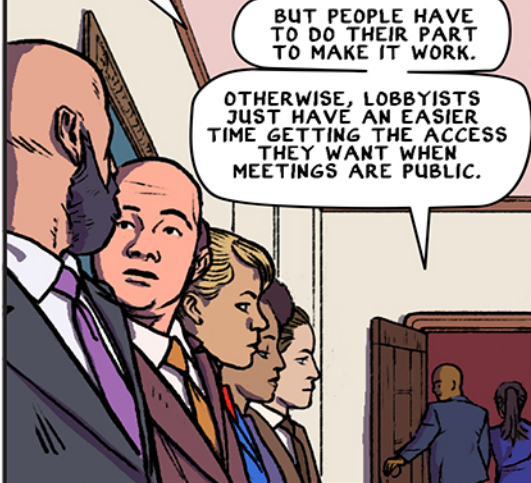


SO NOT ENOUGH OF US ACTUALLY SHOW UP TO INFLUENCE OUR REPRESENTATIVES.

TRANSPARENCY SOUNDS GOOD IN THEORY,

BUT PEOPLE HAVE TO DO THEIR PART TO MAKE IT WORK.

OTHERWISE, LOBBYISTS JUST HAVE AN EASIER TIME GETTING THE ACCESS THEY WANT WHEN MEETINGS ARE PUBLIC.



NOW.

WELL, THESE REPRESENTATIVES COULD ADVERTISE OPEN MEETINGS BETTER.

PERHAPS. BUT UNTIL MORE PEOPLE ARE INTERESTED, REPORTERS WILL BE THE MAIN SOURCE OF INFORMATION ABOUT WHAT'S HAPPENING HERE.



I JUST GOT STOPPED AT THE DOOR.

I HAVE TO FIND ANOTHER WAY TO FIGURE OUT WHAT THEY ARE TALKING ABOUT IN THERE.



LOOKS LIKE HE HAD THE SAME IDEA AS US.

YEAH, BUT YOU PROBABLY WOULDN'T WANT HIM IN THAT ROOM. HE'S A LOBBYIST FOR THE OIL AND GAS INDUSTRY.

