

**Commission, this is bad policy and bad politics**

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It would be easy enough for me to go on a rant about what is clearly an attack not only on the right to freedom of speech but also the right to petition the government "for a redress of grievances."

But I won't. If anyone does, I understand how difficult it is for you to sit quietly while others attack what you stand for and, especially when they do so in a manner that you believe is abusive and unfair. It happens to me almost every day, and it will happen again after this is published.

Someone, maybe several someones, will Zing!, e-mail or otherwise seek to publish their views, which will be just the opposite of mine. Some will get published, others not – but their viewpoints will still be expressed. What to do? Speak up to defend your position, but don't lash out and don't limit access to the podium.

The message of this should not be lost on the Tallahassee City Commission or the city's attorney, Jim English: In politics and the media, we work for the people – even those who so disagree with us they want us replaced – and not the other way around.

When they address us, it is our privilege and their right. English seems to make a habit of getting these things backward. He recently talked about limiting citizens' "privilege" to address the commission.

Furthermore, sending e-mails and letters to public employees does not abuse the system; it is exactly the system the Founding Fathers envisioned. Even if they didn't know about the Internet, they knew about strongly held opinions; they went to war over theirs.

So, before I start to rant on the topic – which would be easy for me to do – let me switch gears by asking members of the City Commission this: What are you thinking? Politically, I mean.

Not only is your reaction bad public policy, it's bad politics, too. You have taken one person's 15 seconds of fame and turned it into a month of Sundays by lashing out. Stay on this same path, and you will turn it into a full term on the commission.

Let me be specific: Erwin Jackson, who is running against recently appointed Commissioner Gil Ziffer, has raised a couple important points, notably on deferred compensation. That's an issue on which most of us, I suspect, would agree with Jackson. The commission shouldn't have done what it did five years ago, and it should better understand the public outcry against it now.

That has had nothing to do with Ziffer, except this: The commission is starting to look more and more like a privileged private club instead of an elected body of the people. From where I sit out here in the masses, this is what it looks like:

- First vote yourself an increase in compensation in what can only be described as a cleverly quiet manner
- Then change the charter to appoint a member rather than allow the people to decide
- And now your attorney is looking at ways to limit the speech of those who disagree with you.

Perhaps instead of worrying about and lamenting Jackson's behavior, the commission should take a hard look at its own. With commissioners' help, that one trick pony is starting to look more and more like Secretariat.

You can send your comments by clicking the button below, e-mailing me at [bgabordi@tallahassee.com](mailto:bgabordi@tallahassee.com), sending a private message on Tallahassee.com, Twitter [@bgabordi](https://twitter.com/bgabordi), [LinkedIn](#) or [Blogger.com](#). You can also find links to my blogs on Facebook but you have to request to be my friend.

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"The commission shouldn't have done what it did five years ago and it should have better understood the public outcry against it now."

They understand the public outcry, they know why people are angry, because they know what they did was greedy and wrong. They cannot, however, admit that they understand the public outcry, because that will be admitting that they purposefully stole money from the city and the taxpayers.

Good blog. Bob.