

## Response to your email

3 messages

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**Huebsch, Mike - PSC** <Mike.Huebsch@wisconsin.gov> Sun, Dec 13, 2015 at 7:15 PM

To: "dhall@wisconsinwatch.org" <dhall@wisconsinwatch.org>

Cc: "Huebsch, Mike - PSC" <Mike.Huebsch@wisconsin.gov>, "Nelson, Elise - PSC" <Elise.Nelson@wisconsin.gov>, "Hatchell, Teresa - PSC" <Teresa.Hatchell@wisconsin.gov>

Ms. Hall:

As you may know, I rarely respond to you or your colleagues at your previous employer. Recent experience has made clear to me that it is unnecessary since your article is already written. While you may use a portion of my response to confirm your pre-determined narrative, you will never allow the new set of facts that I may present to alter your opinion or the focus of your story. Your email to me confirms my point.

You have asked why it was the policy of the Walker administration to avoid creating records by using private cellphones and avoiding use of the state email. Based upon your obviously errant interpretation of conversations with previous secretaries, you ask why I directed cabinet secretaries to avoid the state email and state phone system. At no point do you ask whether or not that actually occurred. You have accepted it as fact. You have already written the story.

You and I have been around long enough to remember when journalists would seek the facts and allow those to determine the story. When things were written that I felt were inaccurate or misleading, I could have a conversation with that journalist and not fear retribution or reprisal from someone who, as the old saying goes, "buys their ink by the barrel." For a select few today, the only stories that are written, or the only facts that are included are those that fit the pre-determined story or bias of that journalist.

I will respond first to your obviously errant interpretation. If your premise was accurate, that I directed secretaries

to take steps to avoid creating public records, then wouldn't I insist upon them using the telephone? Since anyone would know that no public record can be created by a telephonic conversation, unless one of the parties is taping it, it is ludicrous to say I would direct them to avoid the state phone system. I don't know why you would misrepresent an obvious point, but as I will point out, the facts of what I said, regardless of how little regard you will pay them, are quite to the contrary.

I did not warn my fellow cabinet members of the caution they must take when using email at a cabinet meeting early in Governor Walker's term. I did it repeatedly, at several cabinet meetings. I did not direct them to never use email, I told them to be prepared that anything they write, or more accurately an edited version of their email that fits a pre-written story could show up on the front page of the newspaper, so review emails carefully before sending.

Email is often spur of the moment, sometimes emotion driven communication. It can include irony, sarcasm or thoughts intended as jokes that, when taken literally or out of the full context of the conversation can appear to mean something very different, even completely opposite of what was intended. In this era of "gotcha" politics, where opponents and some journalists use anything available not just to embarrass but destroy, extra caution is essential.

Although unnecessary, since I'm sure you've already considered doing it, I will provide an example from a previous paragraph. If you print the line "I did it repeatedly, at several cabinet meetings," as my only response to your email, your pre-determined, narrative driven story is complete. It is taken out of context and means the exact opposite, but for a select few of you that is no longer a concern.

In addition, I did not tell them to avoid making public records. I instructed them that it didn't matter if they were using "state email, Gmail or carrier pigeon," if they were dealing with state business, it is subject to open records. Finally, in drawing upon my years of experience dealing with the print journalists in the Capitol press corps, I

encouraged them to “pick up the phone” whenever possible rather than email. I did not give that advice to avoid creating a public record. I have never feared having the people of Wisconsin hear the entire record of our activities. I simply know they will never hear it through you or a select few of your colleagues.

Thank you for actually providing me the time to respond.

I have become used to the practice of stories running with lines like “there was no response to attempts to contact,” only to find a voice mail was left on an office phone at 5:30pm on a Friday.

Best Regards,

Mike Huebsch