



Carla Marinucci  
Debra Kahn  
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POLITICO

Good Afternoon,

I read with disappointment your article entitled “Pandemic Perk: Inside Access to Lawmakers?” It completely mischaracterizes the safety oriented process for returning to the Capitol in line with the phased-in reopening guidelines of Sacramento County that was made not just for lobbyists but for the public as well. In fact, and in ironic counterpoint to your “article,” if you had paid attention, you would have noticed that members of the public availed themselves of these Capitol access procedures to oppose ACA 25, which would allow for proxy voting and remote voting and unprecedented legislative appointment of replacement legislators in times of various declared regional, statewide or even remote national “emergencies” with no process for terminating the declared conditions. Specifically, you have selectively quoted our communication with IGA members to insinuate that the process established was done in some clandestine way with the intent of benefitting only the few. The “effective, albeit, limited process for lobbying the floor” that you have framed as some special accommodation for the few was intended to be available for all. The process is not “limited” as to whom may use it, the limitation is in comparison to the regular freedom of the public, lobbyists included, to move about the Capitol during normal times.

As lobbyists and members of IGA we don’t ask for, nor do we expect, any processes that are not also available to the public. We are a membership organization with the specific mission of preserving and defending the First Amendment Right to petition the government.

When we entered into discussions with Legislative staff, we did so with the intent of ensuring that lobbyists and the public had the ability to bear witness to Legislative proceedings. As practitioners, it seemed reasonable and appropriate to initiate that discussion. This was not a secret arrangement intended to benefit the few, it was negotiated on behalf of IGA members with the public in mind.

I am wondering why anyone would take issue with individuals exercising their First Amendment right to petition the Government and wonder even more why it would be portrayed in a negative light. It is surprising to me that at a time when the press is under such strain and being literally attacked in the streets, you would characterize the exercise of free speech in a negative manner.

The purpose of IGA is to protect the public's First Amendment right. We have attempted to be as transparent as possible and if in some way we have failed in this instance we will endeavor to do better. But this was in no way intended to benefit the few to the exclusion of the many.

Lastly, I am told that Ms. Kahn talked to one of our members and was told repeatedly that the phased-in reopening was intended to benefit the public and that it was not a special accommodation intended for only a few lobbyists. You knew our intent and you still chose to mischaracterize the outcome.

Dominic DiMare,  
President, Institute of Governmental Advocates