

From: [Gina Calabrese](#)
To: [BOR AllReps](#)
Cc: [Board of Representatives](#)
Subject: Fw: L&R Committee Item LR32.005
Date: Monday, January 12, 2026 4:17:01 PM

Dear Members of the Board of Representatives:

On December 23, 2025, I sent the email below to leadership, L&R committee leaders, sponsors, and to my own District 8 representatives (mistakenly, to the non-governmental emails of my reps). I noticed that my December 23rd email on the Public Comment restriction measure does not appear as part of the Written Testimony in the File Summary for LR.32.005. Please include the email below to the legislative record for this item, which is on the Steering Committee's Agenda this evening.

Thank you.

Gina Calabrese
300 Seaside Ave.

----- Forwarded Message -----

From: Gina Calabrese <gmcabrese@aol.com>
To: "mmckeown@stamfordct.gov" <mmckeown@stamfordct.gov>; "kcamporeale@stamfordct.gov" <kcamporeale@stamfordct.gov>; "dblank@stamfordct.gov" <dblank@stamfordct.gov>; "cgilbride@stamfordct.gov" <cgilbride@stamfordct.gov>; "agoldberg@stamfordct.gov" <agoldberg@stamfordct.gov>; "mboudreau@stamfordct.gov" <mboudreau@stamfordct.gov>; "sstone1@stamfordct.gov" <sstone1@stamfordct.gov>; "cweinberg@stamfordct.gov" <cweinberg@stamfordct.gov>; "rshaw@stamfordct.gov" <rshaw@stamfordct.gov>; Theodore Gross <iamtheogross@gmail.com>; Matthew Yeager <matteiga@gmail.com>; "emorson@stamfordct.gov" <emorson@stamfordct.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, December 23, 2025 at 07:12:14 PM EST
Subject: L&R Committee Item LR32.005

Dear Members of the Legislative and Rules Committee, Sponsors of Item LR 32.005, Board President Shaw, Majority Leader Morson, and District 8 Representatives:

My name is Gina Calabrese, and I reside in District 8. I write to express my opposition to the limitations on public comment proposed in Item LR 32.005 and to raise some issues for your discussion this evening.

As you are undoubtedly aware, any restriction on speech by a governmental body raises the danger of violating 1st Amendment rights under the U.S. Constitution, and in all probability, the State of Connecticut's Constitution. This is an area to tread with utmost caution and only with advice of counsel. There is also the constitutional right to petition the government. With that background, I suggest you consider the following points:

1. Be transparent about the goal of the restrictions. My understanding is that time management of meetings may be a priority for the 32nd BOR. As a frequent attendee at BOR meetings, it is my observation that the public comment period is not responsible for prolonging meetings. While the

public comment period can last 30 minutes or slightly longer when there are topics of great interest to the public, at many meetings, there are only a few speakers and the public comment ends before 30 minutes.

2. Limiting any individual to speaking three times per calendar year risks limiting that individual's constitutional rights to free speech. There seems to be an assumption that a person who frequently speaks at meetings may have nothing valuable to contribute after they have had opportunities to speak at three meetings. However, new issues arise every month. A limit like this would constrict a resident's right to address different issues. If time management and giving all who wish to speak a fair opportunity to be heard is the concern, you could prioritize speakers who have not spoken at a meeting during the year and let them go ahead of those who have spoken at previous meetings. Repeat speakers could speak if time permits.

3. The restriction on addressing a matter the speaker has addressed at a prior meeting is problematic. If a matter is still open, there could be developments since the last meeting that the speaker should have an opportunity to address.

4. The prohibition against disparaging a government official is probably the most problematic part of this proposed amendment. It is vulnerable to attack as "unconstitutionally vague." In particular, a general rule "deeming" a disparaging remark to be "disruptive" or "unruly" is a dangerous restriction. Whether a statement is "disparaging"

can be a very subjective determination. As adults who have entered the political world, any government official must be able to endure criticism, and not just compliments. This restriction would allow only positive feedback. That alone is a restriction on speech. I value civility in public discourse. We have all observed and experienced the steep deterioration in public discourse these last nine years. Yet, there are times when unjust, bigoted, false, unethical, or reprehensible actions or words must be met with strong statements in response. I urge you to consult legal counsel to see if you can achieve your goals in a more limited, specific way such as prohibiting generally acknowledged swear words. Otherwise, this particular restriction seems autocratic, authoritarian, and frankly, Trumpian. I doubt that this all-Democrat board wants to leave a legacy like that or emulate the behavior and values of the current national leader. And now I have a question for you. Are my last two sentences violative of the proposed amendment — even though you may agree with part of what I just wrote? Different answers show how subjective this restriction would be.

5. Finally, the item leaves open the possibility of eliminating the rule allowing public comment altogether. That strikes me as anti-democratic. It can also pose a hardship to people who are not regular users of email. For example, some of the older residents who came to meetings to petition their representatives about unhealthy living conditions in their senior apartment building. And an email or letter can never replace the impact of a speaker's presence on serious issues like the conditions of the senior apartment complex I just described. Surely, this board that consists of only Democrats does not want to hide difficult situations. That is not a Democratic party that I have belong to my entire adult life. I doubt it's the legacy the 32nd Board wants to leave in this city.

Sincerely,

Gina Calabrese
917-837-6404

Please excuse typos.

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