



To: E-mail Records Review Panel  
From: Rick Thames, NCPA vice president and editor, The Charlotte Observer  
Subj: Solutions discussion

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Mr. Chairman, panel members, good morning and congratulations on hitting the home stretch.

That said, I'm going to do all I can to convince you that we need to stretch a bit more for the sake of this great state.

First, I want to thank you all sincerely for taking the preservation of e-mail seriously. You've demonstrated that by calling for all state employees to be trained on the handling of e-mail as public documents.

On behalf of the North Carolina Press Association, we applaud your emphasis on training and urge you to make it part of your final recommendations.

But please don't stop there.

Every government e-mail is a public record. It is important that every e-mail be captured and archived daily.

We are not concerned about employees deleting messages that are purely personal or junk mail that evaded the spam filter.

But to delete any work-related message is to destroy a public document.

Each of the four scenarios presented in the panel's working paper remains out of compliance with the state's Public Records Law for the following reason:

All authorize a state employee to follow a records retention policy that permits immediate deletion or destruction of public record e-mail deemed not to have lasting value.

In a letter to the chairman, the NCPA's Legislative Counsel John Bussian explains another scenario proposed by the NCPA and its 200-plus member newspapers.

(Letter from John Bussian read)

Now, I understand that the cost of e-mail archival continues to be a concern for many who are advising the panel.

In my last visit with you, I suggested that the cost of archival should be weighed against the cost of state employees spending time each day determining which e-mail should be saved and which could be deleted under the law.

Here's some math to consider. As I understand it, the state has roughly 90,000 full-time employees. They earn an average of \$18.60 an hour.

If these employees, on average, spend 15 minutes a day evaluating e-mails, that activity will cost the state more than \$2 million A WEEK.

Some form of automated archiving would, unquestionably, be a better deal for the taxpayers of North Carolina.

Now, I've invited a colleague to tell you about one state's progress in converting to such a system. That state is Missouri.

I would now like to introduce Steve Riley, a senior editor for the News & Observer of Raleigh.