



October 28, 2016

Hon. Linda B. Rosenthal
Member, New York State Assembly, District 67
230 West 72nd Street
Suite 2F
New York, NY 10023

Dear Assemblymember Rosenthal:

My name is Scott Peterson and I am the executive director of [Checks and Balances Project](#). We are a national watchdog blog that focuses on accountability for lobbyists, government officials and others who block the growth of a sustainable economy.

As you may know, an important leader of the hotel industry, [LaSalle Hotel Properties President & CEO Michael D. Barnello](#), admitted on a recent public earnings call that the anti-home sharing legislation that you sponsored (Bill 8704-C) “should be a big boost in the arm for the business . . . certainly in terms of the pricing.”

Mr. Barnello’s comments seem to us to be a remarkable admission of an intent to price gouge.

I presume that enabling hotel price gouging was not your expressed intent, but Mr. Barnello’s comment suggests that this was the intent of the lobbyists who pushed for your bill.

To help New Yorkers understand the intent of you and the hotel lobby that pushed for your bill, I ask that you voluntarily release all communications with relevant hotel lobby players – including New York Hotel and Motel Trades Council (HTC) President Peter Ward or any other representatives of HTC; Neil Kwatra, Austin Shafran, and any other employees of Metropolitan Public Strategies; any member of the Hotel Association of New York (HANY); and any member of the American Hotel & Lodging Association (AH&LA). The records we seek include text messages, public and private emails, official phone logs, and all meetings calendars.

We are aware that New York’s Freedom of Information Law provides a broad exemption for legislators—an exemption that contributes to New York’s reputation for corruption in Albany. But in the spirit of transparency and accountability, we ask that you provide these records. If your work on this bill was driven solely by public interest, then we are sure there will be nothing of concern in these records.

We found these type of public records to be of tremendous service to our readers and the wider citizenry during our investigation of the Arizona Corporation Commission ([here](#), [here](#) and [here](#)).

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We think it is worth noting that Mr. Ward has not responded to several weeks of [basic questions](#) about the way he secures his members' consent to provide their money - [\\$100,000 of it](#) – to an industry group (HANY) that opposes higher minimum wages.

Thank you for taking the time to address this matter.

Regards,

Scott Peterson
Executive Director