



State of Connecticut

SENATE

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SENATOR TONI BOUCHER
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FINANCE, REVENUE AND BONDING COMMITTEE

November 30, 2012

Chairman Lewis J. Robinson
CT Board of Regents
39 Woodland Street
Hartford, CT 06105

Dear Chairman Robinson,

As Board of Regents Chair you are keenly aware of the issues that plague the higher education system in our state. At present my focus in the legislature is contending with a looming \$3 billion deficit through 2016 and how we can make thoughtful changes going forward.

Today I write to express my concerns regarding the 'unvouchered accommodation accounts' granted to state university presidents. At a time when most state employees have been living with a wage freeze and students have been burdened with tuition increases of 3% or more I find the practice of spending public money without accountability unjustified.

Why do university presidents need such unrestricted latitude to spend the public's money? I cannot imagine there is a satisfactory answer.

I was not aware this perk existed until former Regents President Robert Kennedy's contract was made public. As a ranking member of the Higher Education Committee I was shocked to learn that the former president of the state Board of Regents for Higher Education was allowed a \$25,000 unvouchered accommodations account every year of his five year contract.

According to published reports, Kennedy's contract allowed for the unvouchered account to be used at his "sole discretion" for activities related to the Board of Regents, including fundraising

and community outreach. But there is no mechanism to ensure that this public money is being used appropriately or in the manner intended.

Today, I learned that state university presidents' also benefit from unrestricted unvouchered spending accounts. The policies only say the money is to be used at the sole discretion of the presidents and could easily be perceived by the public as lavish "slush" funds.

In these difficult and uncertain economic times the taxpayers have a right to question the soundness of such policies. They are asking us to be responsible stewards of their tax dollars. I ask that you and your special committee tasked with reviewing these contracts and salaries consider more checks and balances when it comes to these types of benefits. Even better, eliminate them altogether. I look forward to seeing the final report from your special committee on administration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Toni".

Senator Toni Boucher

Ranking Member of the Higher Education and Education Committees