

Statement of Republican Members of the Judiciary Committee
May 12, 2009

It is with a great deal of concern and sadness that the Republican members of the Judiciary Committee are taking the extraordinary step of walking out of today's executive session of the Judiciary Committee leaving only Democrat members in attendance today.

Throughout this term, the Republicans on the Judiciary Committee have struggled to be heard and contribute to the process of careful consideration of legislation. In public hearings and policy debates in executive sessions before committee votes, we have tried to constructively contribute to the legislative process.

We have resisted the almost inescapable conclusion that the results of committee hearings and executive sessions have been predetermined by the majority party. We have done so despite motions to adopt or kill a bill being recognized by a Chairman who does not even look up to "see" the silent majority party representatives making the motions and despite votes of a majority party that seldom show any deviation from the party line.

We can no longer avoid this conclusion as a result of the debate on the Gay Marriage Bill. In our last committee hearing on May 5, the majority party voted to bring the Gay Marriage Bill before the House even while acknowledging it was flawed and the entirely new language of the Senate "amendment" had never had a public hearing. This May 5th decision alone made a mockery of the legislative process. But the contempt of the majority party for the legislative process was raised to a new level in the House the next day.

On May 6, having enacted the flawed Gay Marriage Bill, they brought forth a Senate bill that addressed some, but not the most serious of those flaws. This new Senate amendment had only existed for several hours that day in the Senate before it passed without a public hearing or debate. It was tacked on a House bill that had nothing to do with gay marriage, but the majority party passed it within less than two hours of its arrival in the House.

This victory ramming through major legislation without any public hearing or debate was preceded by false attempts of the majority party on the House floor to say that House Republicans on the Judiciary Committee had heard and voted on the legislation.

The majority party has told House Republican members of the Judiciary Committee that their contribution is neither wanted nor considered. Just as Gov. Lynch did when he said that he was not considering citizen telephone calls on the Gay Marriage Bill, Democrats on the Judiciary Committee are telling the tens of thousands of New Hampshire citizens represented by their Republican colleagues on the Committee to "shut up" and go away.

Our constituents will not shut up and neither will we. Today, however we will protest the majority party's violations of the sacred principles of representative government in the House and in this Committee by leaving. We will go to where we hope our voices will be heard. We will take Gov. Lynch up on his promise to listen to legislators on the Gay Marriage Bill. We will go to him and tell him how about the substantial flaws in that bill – flaws that could have been removed if the legislative process was not broken.

Statement of Republican Members of the Judiciary Committee
May 12, 2009

Rep. Robert Rowe

Rep. Nancy Elliot

Rep. Robert Mead

Rep. William O'Brien

Rep. Lawrence Perkins

Rep. Peter Silva

Rep. William Smith