

More than a third of Richard Hanna's letter was lifted from an online column

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By **Glenn Coin / The Post-Standard**

More than a third of a letter from U.S. Rep. Richard Hanna published Feb. 20 in The Post-Standard is almost identical to an online column posted a week earlier on a think tank's website.

While the author of the online column said he gave Hanna permission to use his words, Hanna should have alerted the public and explicitly attributed the borrowed text, some said.

"Anybody reading this is going to think Hanna wrote it," said Charlotte Grimes, a political-reporting professor at Syracuse University's S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications. "The fact that it's already been published somewhere else under someone else's byline is going to quite rightfully raise the question: Who is the real author here?"

Hanna's letter explained the congressman's reasons for voting against extending three provisions of the Patriot Act that were set to expire. Three paragraphs — about 250 of the letter's 674 words — are almost identical to a Feb. 9 column by Julian Sanchez, a writer for the Cato Institute think tank.

Hanna, who underwent heart surgery last week, was not available for comment.

Sanchez said he allowed Hanna, R-Barneveld, to use exact phrases from a summary of the bill's provisions that Sanchez had written for members of Congress.

"As far as I'm concerned," Sanchez wrote in an e-mail, "this is a routine case of legislators adapting analysis from outside experts in explaining policy issues to their constituents."

Sanchez's name does not appear as a contributor to the letter sent to The Post-Standard. The credit line read: "By Richard Hanna, U.S. Representative. New York 24th Congressional District."

The Post-Standard's executive editor, Mike Connor, said Hanna should have credited Sanchez in his letter.

"Our expectation would be that if someone's name is on a submission to the letters page, that person is the author," Connor said. "If there is a co-author for a substantial part of that submission, in this case more than a third, we would expect that person to be credited."

Here's an example of the similarities between Hanna's letter and Sanchez's column:

Sanchez: "So-called 'lone wolf' authority allows non-citizens in the U.S. who are suspected of involvement in terrorist activities to be monitored under the broad powers afforded by the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA). . ."

Hanna: "As drafted currently, the Patriot Act includes "lone wolf" authority that allows non-citizens in our country who are suspected of involvement in terrorist activities to be monitored under the broad powers afforded by the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA). . ."

To see the complete columns online, go to:

Sanchez: **www.cato-at-liberty.org/patriot-reauthorization-vote-fails--now-what**

Hanna: **http://blog.syracuse.com/opinion/2011/02/commentary_rep_richard_hanna_e.html**

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