



CONNECTICUT POLICE CHIEFS ASSOCIATION

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Testimony to the Judiciary Committee

February 27, 2006

Chiefs Anthony Salvatore & James Strillacci, Connecticut Police Chiefs Association

We speak in favor of **RB#5464, AAC Arrest Powers of Local Police Officers.**

We seek the Committee's support in amending CGS Section 54-1f to allow local police officers on duty but outside their respective precincts to arrest without warrant for *any offense* if the officer takes the offender in the act or on the speedy information of others. Current law allows this only if the offense is a felony.

We have advocated for similar bills in past sessions, because the amendment would:

- allow police to compete with the increased mobility of criminals, who pay no attention to municipal boundaries.
- allow officers to charge prisoners for acts committed while in their custody but while outside of precinct (e.g., officer takes a prisoner to court or to a hospital, and the prisoner assaults the officer, damages the police car, or attacks medical personnel).
- allow one agency to investigate and file charges in mobile incidents which cross boundaries (car-jacking, abduction, e.g.) instead of requiring multiple agencies to handle segments of the incidents.
- facilitate mutual aid between municipal departments.
- increase deterrence by and respect for police, who could act on offenses they see while out of precinct (on which they now have no authority to act.)
- increase revenue to the state. (One out-of-precinct traffic ticket per week per local officer would generate millions in fines, for instance.)
- assist regional police efforts, such as drug, gun, or auto theft task forces, by allowing full powers to officers of several municipalities who are working together on crime problems which transcend municipal boundaries.

The prior bills did not pass. Why should this year be different? Because there's more support, from people who understand that the safety and security of Connecticut requires dismantling artificial barriers which obstruct communication and cooperation.

We briefed the Department of Emergency Management and Homeland Security Coordinating Council at their February 9 meeting, and sought their support. The members quickly comprehended that the proposed amendment would benefit homeland-security efforts by adding thousands of trained officers to the eyes and ears keeping watch in our state. Although a terrorist attack itself is a



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felony, it may be solved or prevented by an officer acting on a lesser offense, or merely suspicious activity. For example, the Oklahoma City bomber was caught due to a routine traffic violation.

Emergency managers saw the proposal's value in aiding regional cooperation, as regionalism has been a requirement of federal homeland security funding. They grasped its value as to credentialing responders—local police officers are certified to statewide standards by POST, their uniforms and identification quickly recognized.

Fire chiefs understood the proposal's benefit in encouraging inter-agency assistance, because mutual support is a cornerstone of their profession.

A small-town executive was eager for a means to obtain police mutual-aid assistance; he said his town is patrolled by state police, who will not allow mutual-aid pacts.

A hospital administrator noted that a biological emergency would require heavy security at his hospital but would overwhelm the city police, necessitating suburban police to fill the gap. He said the bill would clearly help the situation.

Speakers were unanimous in their approval until Commissioner of Public Safety Leonard Boyle asked to table the motion. He said he didn't anticipate the motion and needed time to prepare a response. The motion was tabled.

Commissioner Boyle submitted testimony opposing this proposal in 2005; I have a copy. It's identical to the testimony of his predecessor, Commissioner Spada, in 2004. Their objections were these:

They feared that officers' actions out of precinct would give rise to disputed workers' compensation claims. This fear is groundless. It is clear that coverage for a line-of-duty injury applies within or without the officer's town. The Connecticut Conference of Municipalities is unconcerned by this issue, and supports the bill.

Boyle and Spada claim that the meaning of "on-duty" will be in dispute when an officer acts outside his geographical area. Finally, they claim that the danger in an officer operating in what they call a "foreign town" outweighs any benefit. These claims are insincere. For decades the state police have had the authority to make arrests in any town in the state, whether patrolled by a local department or by the state, but the commissioners have not proposed rescission of the troopers' authority.

New York, Vermont, and California have similar provisions, and police are expected and authorized to act as police anywhere in the state. Congress has shown its confidence in local police by allowing current and retired officers to carry firearms anywhere in the U.S.

Amending 54-1f will increase the number of police available to protect Connecticut's citizens by allowing police to take action wherever it is needed.