



# CONNECTICUT CONFERENCE OF MUNICIPALITIES

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## TESTIMONY

of the

## CONNECTICUT CONFERENCE OF MUNICIPALITIES

to the

## JUDICIARY COMMITTEE

March 3, 2006

The Connecticut Conference of Municipalities supports **R.B. 361, "An Act Concerning Possessions and Personal Effects of Tenants Evicted From Residential Property"**.

R.B. 361 would relieve municipalities of the unfunded state mandate to remove and store the personal property belonging to evicted residential tenants. Municipalities were relieved in 1997 of the mandate to remove and store the possessions of evicted commercial tenants.

This mandate is costly to municipalities. It is estimated that there are about 2,500 residential evictions per year. This might be a conservative estimate: last year, Bridgeport alone estimated 700 evictions.

And, storage costs average \$10 per day, per eviction, for an average of 15 days. The costs for storage alone – *excluding staff, vehicles and other administrative costs* – can range from approximately \$9,000 to \$147,900.

The mandate takes up considerable time on the municipal level. When a person has been evicted, municipalities must (1) secure a moving vehicle to pick up property and take it to a storage facility, and (2) store the possessions for at least 15 days. Municipalities are allowed to try to recoup some of the costs by auctioning off the items. However, municipalities must incur costs associated with conducting an auction (including publicizing the auction, etc.). And, usually the possessions are not sellable. According to one municipal official involved in this process, the belongings are reclaimed in only about 10% of the cases.

Municipalities should not be thrown in the middle of what is essentially a landlord-tenant issue. S.B. 361 develops a mechanism by which tenants are made more aware of the ramifications of evictions, to reduce the possibility of possessions being left in dwellings at the time of eviction.

CCM urges the Committee to examine the Office of Legislative Research's "Research Report", Number 2006-R-0164. Entitled, "State Laws on Landlord's Treatment of Abandoned Property", the report shows that, of the 37 states researched, *Connecticut is the only state that mandates that municipalities remove and store the possessions of evicted tenants*. In other states, landlords or sheriffs have the responsibility.

The argument of those who want the municipal mandate to continue rings hollow: since the mandate has been in effect for over 100 years, it must have merit. This law represents the kind of unfunded mandate that exists now simply because municipalities tend to be a convenient catchall for situations that the State wants to address.

CCM urges the Committee to favorably report this bill.



If you have any questions, please call Ron Thomas or Gian-Carl Casa of CCM at (203) 498-3000.