

Monday, February 26, 2007

Statement: Robert "Red" McKeon

Chair and distinguished members:

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to Bill 5309. As an individual who has been involved in fire and emergency services since 1944 when I joined the Occum Volunteer Fire Department; one who has served as a volunteer fire chief from 1960 to 1995; Governor appointments to the Blue Ribbon Committee for EMS Training from 1988 to 2002; served as President of Eastern EMS from 1979 to 1984, and worked with U.S. Dept of Transportation and F.A.A for air space for Hartford Hospital to purchase Life Star helicopter on May 1, 1985, I offer you the following. In 1966, the Vietnam War was underway and the need for medics was heard nationally. After numerous phone calls, I made contact with the appropriate individual. I became a member of the 11 member team who made five trips to work with US Department of Labor at Center for Disease and Control (CDC) OSHA in Atlanta, GA. Beginning in the fall of 1966 and through 1969, the team developed training for EMT and MRT personnel. In 1969 I worked with Dr. Judd and Middlesex Community College and we initiated the first emergency medical technician class in CT. In 1970, I became the first EMT and EMS-I in the state. On July 1, 1970 the EMT course was implemented across the United States.

During this time there were only three regions within Connecticut, which consisted of Region 1 – Fairfield and Litchfield; Region 2 - Hartford and New Haven and Region 3 - New London, Windham, Tolland and Middlesex counties. Understanding the vast area of state to be serviced, a few individuals, including myself came before the Public Health Committee and advocated to have the three regions be expanded to five regions. The Public Health Committee recognized the need and endorsed concept. As a result five regions emerged to better serve the emergency services needs of our citizens. As an individual has been involved with various financial and policy making aspects of fire and emergency services over the past 63 years, my concern with Bill 5309 is currently each of the five Regional Councils is functioning independently of each other. Although I support Bill 5309 in concept, I would strongly recommend consideration be given to have the five regions report to the Public Health Commissioner or their designee. By centralizing the reporting structure, this would insure uniformity in training, standardization of operational procedures and equity throughout the five regions. Centralization will create an even stronger fire and emergency services structure. I thank you for your time and urge you to support having the five regions report to the Public Health Commissioner or their designee.