



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



TESTIMONY OF THE
COMMISSIONER OF AGRICULTURE
REGARDING
RAISED HOUSE BILL No. 7386
AN ACT CONCERNING THE CONVEYANCE OF CERTAIN PARCELS
OF STATE LAND AND CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM
BEFORE THE
GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION AND ELECTION COMMITTEE

MARCH 19, 2007

Senator Slossberg, Representative Caruso and members of the Government Administration and Election Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on Raised Bill No. 7386, "An Act Concerning the Conveyance of Certain Parcels of State Land and Campaign Finance Reform". I will be commenting on three sections (sections 5, 6 and 9).

Section 5. Transfer of Land in Newtown

The Department of Agriculture supports the transfer of this land, including the barn that is located on it. The barn is in need of repair, and the Geckle Conservation Foundation is interested restoring it. There are three issues that the Department wants to emphasize. The first is that the owner should be allowed to lease the property as long as it is for agricultural use (Subsection (3) on line 123 of the bill); second, that the administrative cost include a survey of the property; and third, that the State of Connecticut retain the right of way across the property for access to Queen Street.

Section 6. Transfer of Land in Griswold

As Commissioner of Agriculture, I also serve on the Board of Control of the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station, and in that role, oppose the transfer of land to Griswold. This area is important agricultural land and should be kept as such. The plan is to transfer this land from the Department of Environmental Protection to the Experiment Station where it will be used for agricultural testing as well as continued testing on mosquito transmitted disease -- both major areas of concern. I would strongly urge that the committee not support this transfer.

Section 9. Transfer of Penfield Reef Lighthouse to Fairfield

The Department of Agriculture does not have a problem with the transfer, but is concerned with the definition of the property boundaries. A portion of the property description in this bill is the same location description included in a shellfish lease (828) issued by the Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Aquaculture. A shellfish lease grants the right to plant and cultivate shellfish on submerged lands. The lighthouse transfer should clearly indicate that it shall not impact access to shellfish within the boundaries of the established lease. Careful consideration should be taken in defining

this area and acknowledging the shellfish lease and shellfishing rights. Our agency would be happy to assist in the development of appropriate language.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment on these sections.

For further information, please contact:

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