

**COMMENTS CONCERNING RAISED BILL NO. 5596**  
**AN ACT CONCERNING THE RIGHT TO DRY**  
By Michael Zimmer

Summary

This bill proposes to impose restrictions on how common interest communities govern themselves. This bill requires that community associations limit their abilities to self-govern with respect to the issue of energy conservation.

Michael Zimmer

I am currently a member of the Board of Directors of the Community Associations Institute - Connecticut Chapter. CAI-CT is the educational and technical assistance entity for community associations and their service providers in Connecticut. I also serve as the President of the 166 unit common interest community in which I live, Meadows of Southington. I have been the president for over twelve years.

I am submitting my comments, and appearing before the committee, to present my insights into how the proposed bill will negatively affect the more than 3,900 common interest communities in Connecticut, and the hundreds of thousands of people who live in them.

Statement

CAI supports thoughtful environmental stewardship. That's why CAI's affiliate, the Foundation for Community Association Research, worked with the U.S. Department of Energy on a best practices pertaining to energy efficiency ([www.cairf.org/research/bpefficiency.pdf](http://www.cairf.org/research/bpefficiency.pdf)).

At the same time, we believe homeowners in each association should decide the rules under which they choose to live. Specific policies, including those pertaining to energy-saving measures such as clotheslines and solar panels, should be determined by each community association board—the homeowner volunteers who have been elected by their neighbors to serve the best interests of their individual communities.

The preferences of individual residents, whether related to environmental concerns or other issues, must always be weighed against the best interests of the

community at large. But, while dissenting voices have a right to be heard, all residents have a contractual obligation to abide by the rules established by the association.

Some community associations place a strong emphasis on environmental concerns, from preserving open spaces to adopting rules that promote energy conservation. Homeowners in other associations try to strike a balance between conservation and aesthetics. Homeowners who have invested in a community are in the best position to make these value judgments, whether the issues involve clotheslines, solar panels or street lighting.

Community association homeowners adopt rules to preserve the nature and appearance of their communities, meet the established expectations of residents and protect property values. It's important to remember, however, that homeowners can modify a rule or even eliminate a restriction if there is enough resident support for a particular change. CAI recommends that associations conduct periodic reviews of their rules to ensure they still have the support of residents. A rule that residents wanted 10 years ago may not make sense today.

Environmental stewardship is important to all of us, and there are many steps communities can take to support a more sustainable future. The most effective way to address environmental issues is to identify and define different approaches and let homeowners in each community make informed decisions on policies that meet their needs and preferences. Such efforts provide sustainable, consensus-driven decisions that reflect the values of the community.

### Conclusion

While we welcome the input of environmental groups, government and others, we do not believe government at any level should attempt to micro-manage private community associations. We believe the residents of Connecticut are better served when our collective resources are dedicated to broad environmental issues, such as alternative fuels, resource recovery, land-use, public transportation, and emissions.

If we can be of any further assistance, please contact our Executive Director, Kim McClain, at 860-633-5692.