

March 3, 2008

To: The Planning and Development Committee

Ref: S.B. 442 (Raised) An Act Concerning Authority Of Boards of Selectmen and the Value of Property Necessary for Eligibility to Vote.

I am honored to be allowed to submit testimony to this committee on the above bill.

HB5801 had previously been passed into law which allowed municipalities to delay property revaluation until up to 2006 pending approval of said municipality's legislative body. At that time the print media stated that this bill would "provide temporary tax relief for beleaguered home owners." The following statement was included in the legislation, "if your legislative body is the town meeting then the selectmen decide." This statement resulted in the following in North Haven where I reside:

1. A petition signed by 1200 voters to delay revaluation until 2006 was ignored by the first selectman. He also stated that perhaps even 3000 to 4000 signatures would not have changed his mind about delaying.

2. The charter right to have a referendum on this issue was removed from 15500 registered voters and given to one person, the first selectman, the majority vote on the board of selectmen.

3. \$6,000,000 was confiscated from nearly 9000 North Haven homeowners and transferred to the business community in the form of a premature tax cut of that same amount. This resulted from the fact that average residential home prices had increased by 75 to 80% while commercial property increased on average only 5 to 15 %.

4. The municipality did not collect one additional dollar in tax revenue.

A group of concerned citizens were able to promote an effort to phase in revaluation over a three year period which passed at the budget referendum by a vote of 3065 for phase in vs. 665 against. (There was also some talk that the right to referendum on the phase in legislation might also be removed in the future.)

I urge you all to support SB442 and restore citizens' rights to referendum in the 101 municipalities that have the town meeting as their legislative body.

Respectfully,

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