



State of Connecticut

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STATE CAPITOL
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06106-1591

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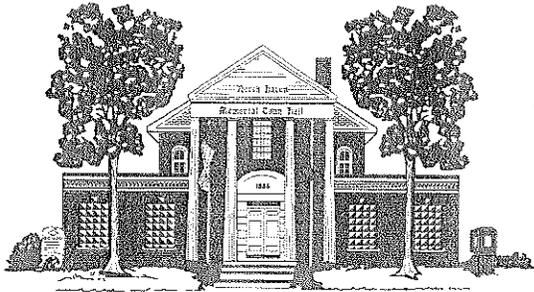
MEMBER
INSURANCE AND REAL ESTATE COMMITTEE
TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

TESTIMONY ON SB 442
PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
MARCH 3, 2008

Representative Feltman, Senator Coleman, members of the Planning & Development Committee, I would like to testify in favor of SB 442, "AAC AUTHORITY OF BOARDS OF SELECTMEN AND THE VALUE OF PROPERTY NECESSARY FOR ELIGIBILITY TO VOTE." Sections 1 through 14 of his bill would transfer from the board of selectmen to the town meeting or representative town meeting, in towns with the "town meeting" form of government, various powers unless a town's charter or ordinance delegates those powers to its board of selectmen.

This bill restores to the voting public, in towns with the "town meeting" form of government, the ability to make certain decisions. It reasserts the principle that, regardless of the type of government that a town chooses, the legislative body of that town should have the power to make key decisions, rather than have that power usurped by an act of the General Assembly and assigned to its board of selectmen. In this sense, the bill seeks to preserve for voters in a "town meeting" town the same rights that voters in a town with another form of government (e.g., council/manager, mayor/council, etc.) have, unless voters in that "town meeting" town choose, by charter or ordinance, to delegate the authority to make certain decisions to their board of selectmen.

Thank you very much for raising this bill and considering my comments.



TOWN OF NORTH HAVEN

MEMORIAL TOWN HALL / 18 CHURCH STREET

NORTH HAVEN, CONNECTICUT 06473



First Selectman
Janet M. McCarty

Tel. (203) 239-5321
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February 29, 2008

Dear Representative Feltman, Senator Coleman &
Members of the Planning & Development Committee:

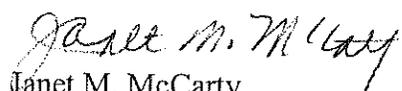
North Haven is very proud of its Town Meeting form of government. We are the largest town in the state with Town Meeting. Those who have campaigned to change our form of government (or even to reform our Town Charter in any way) have soundly been defeated. By and large, the Town Meeting works for us...especially since we automatically take our \$75-80 million budget to referendum. But when state statutes give the executive branch, the Board of Selectmen, control over decisions which clearly should be under the jurisdiction of the legislative body of the town (i.e., the people), then the state has overstepped it's bounds.

I support SB422 for three main reasons: 1) because right now, the 13 statutes listed in the bill, incorrectly, unnecessarily and unwisely tip the balance of power in towns with Town Meeting forms of government, to the executive branch of the government (the Boards of Selectmen); 2) because SB422 restores power to the Town Meeting, the legislative body; and 3) because presently state statutes inconsistently and arbitrarily assign power to one body or to the other...passage of SB422 will start restoring legislative power to the people, where it belongs.

The story of North Haven's 2005 reval demonstrates all three of these reasons. In May 2006, the voters of North Haven overwhelmingly approved "phasing-in" their October 2005 revaluation-driven property tax increases (via referendum, 83% of them voted YES to "phase-in" the reval tax increases). Nine months earlier, North Haveners had been denied the right to vote on whether to delay revaluation until October 2006 because the state had wrested power from the people and gave it to our three-member Board of Selectmen. At that time, the two majority party members of the Board of Selectmen voted against delaying reval (even after they were presented with a petition containing 1,200 signatures). I believe that the Board of Selectmen should not have been given the power to thwart the will of the people that way.

I ask that you support SB422. By doing so, you will help to safeguard the rights of the people in towns like North Haven.

Sincerely,


Janet M. McCarty
First Selectman