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Testimony of

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Before the

CONNECTICUT GENERAL ASSEMBLY'S ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

**RE: SB 3 AN ACT PROHIBITING THE ACQUISITION OR USE OF CERTAIN PARCELS OF LAND
AS ASH RESIDUE DISPOSAL AREAS**

Friday, February 13, 2009

Good morning, Senator Meyer, Representative Roy, Senator McKinney, Representative Chapin, and all the other members of the Environment Committee. My name is Tom Kirk and I am President of the Connecticut Resources Recovery Authority. I am here today to speak in opposition to Senate Bill No. 3, AN ACT PROHIBITING THE ACQUISITION OR USE OF CERTAIN PARCELS OF LAND AS ASH RESIDUE DISPOSAL AREAS.

While the title of this proposed legislation doesn't specify which parcels of land could not be acquired, the text of the bill makes it clear that it is aimed at prohibiting CRRA's proposal to locate an ash landfill behind the former Franklin Farms mushroom factory in Franklin. In order to help you make a reasoned decision when you vote on SB 3, let me explain why we need a publicly owned ash landfill in Connecticut and why the Franklin location is the best location for an ash landfill.

We need a publicly owned ash landfill because it is the most environmentally responsible and most cost-effective method of disposing of the ash residue from the Hartford, Preston and Wallingford trash-to-energy facilities. These facilities directly serve more than 90 cities and towns. It will allow the state to maintain strict control in order to protect our environment and our public health. At the same time, it will save municipalities a projected \$10 million per year in lower tipping and hauling fees when our new ash landfill opens.

As you know, CRRA is charged with implementing Connecticut's Solid Waste Management Plan, which calls for disposing of trash generated by our municipalities in the most cost-effective, most efficient, most environmentally protective manner. To do this we heavily promote recycling in order to divert as much material as possible out of the waste stream. Trash not suitable for recycling is converted into renewable energy which is sold to the power grid. Trash-to-energy facilities are by far the largest source of renewable energy in Connecticut.

Please let me emphasize that trash-to-energy, which is the solid waste management method Connecticut chose in the 1980s, is environmentally protective. Instead of just dumping our trash in a big hole in the ground like the state did until the 1980s, we are significantly reducing the amount of landfilled material while creating much-needed energy to power everything from the lights above us to the computers you turn on to research legislation. Our solid waste management practices make Connecticut the nation's leader in environmental excellence – in fact Connecticut will soon be the only state in the nation that has completely eliminated garbage landfills.

Trash-to-energy is the preferred method of dealing with waste that cannot be reused or recycled. Under CGS 22a-285, the Legislature has directed CRRA to develop four ash landfills, two on each side of the Connecticut River, to dispose of the ash safely, responsibly and cost-effectively. As you know, we had been using a site in Hartford's North Meadows for this purpose, but the Hartford ash landfill recently closed after reaching capacity. In 2005, we began planning for that event by launching what became a three-year screening process to identify the best site for an ash landfill, a site which would ensure the environment and public health would be protected and where traffic from ash-hauling trucks would affect the fewest number of people.

We looked at 77 potential ash landfill sites throughout Connecticut before determining that the Franklin location, behind a closed mushroom factory, best meets the extraordinarily strict ash landfill siting criteria set by DEP, including:

- Safe distance from public water supplies and residential areas;
- Proximity to a large Class B stream or river; and
- Suitable geology, hydrogeology, and hydrology.

Yes, it may seem counterintuitive that an ash landfill would be located near a stream or river, but it is a DEP requirement. This is belt-and-suspenders engineering. In the unlikely event of a failure of the liner system, any water that might contact the ash landfill would migrate into the adjacent stream or river, where it would not impact surface water quality. In this case, the river is the Shetucket, and the chosen site is downstream from the Windham sewage treatment plant and a closed, unlined ash landfill.

Our proposal utilizes state-of-the-art engineering and environmental controls. Seven layers of protection that will ensure the ash – an inorganic, non-odorous material with the consistency of damp concrete – is forever isolated. In fact, our design for the ash landfill is even more protective of the environment and public health than is required by either the DEP or the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Before we apply for permits, however, we first need to confirm that the Franklin site is the state's best location for an ash landfill. We are doing this through a series of detailed ecological, geological, archeological, hydrological, hydro-geological, traffic and topographic site investigations. One critical test, for instance, will tell us whether there is a high-yield aquifer – a water source capable of supplying a minimum 5 million gallons of water daily – under the site. If there is, our search for an ash landfill will go elsewhere.

Please let me expand on my earlier comments about the need for a publicly owned ash landfill. It would provide us with the infrastructure necessary to economically dispose of ash properly. Instead of sending the ash out-of-state or to a private ash-landfill in Connecticut where we cannot control the long term costs, we would maintain control. Connecticut should not be beholden to another state or the private sector for such a vitally important environmental and public health concern.

Although public control of our ash is of critical environmental and public health importance, economic arguments against this bill are equally persuasive. First, it will provide Franklin around \$1.5 million in additional revenue annually for hosting the ash landfill, about one quarter of Franklin's town budget. Many other municipalities will also benefit, though, through the savings of reduced tipping and hauling fees. We project these savings to total \$10 million per year when our ash landfill opens, and more each year after that. It's something I dare say every one of those municipalities will appreciate.

SB 3 would cripple CRRA's ability to effectively manage solid waste in Connecticut, including CRRA's ability to provide savings to our municipalities. I urge you to vote against SB 3 right here in committee so CRRA may continue to do its job – which requires cost-effective disposal of the ash residue from our proven trash-to-energy process.

Thank you for your patience and your understanding.