



State of Connecticut

Office of Consumer Counsel

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The Energy and Technology Committee
March 10, 2009

**H.B. 6633, AAC Recommendations of the Connecticut Academy of
Science and Engineering Regarding Consolidation of Energy Programs and a
Secretary of Energy**

Testimony of Mary J. Healey, Consumer Counsel

The Office of Consumer Counsel (OCC), the independent state advocate for all customers of the regulated utility companies in Connecticut, has reviewed this proposal and is generally supportive of the concept of improving coordination among agencies with energy responsibilities if done in a cost effective way. The same holds true for the establishment of a new executive branch Office of Energy to be headed up by a Secretary of Energy.

Some sections of the bill would essentially move existing energy organizations around on the energy chess board and change reporting chains of command. For example, the Connecticut Energy Advisory Board ("CEAB") would become the Coordinating Council which would report to the Secretary of Energy who would be its new Chair. Currently, CEAB is fairly independent in its advisory capacity to the Legislature. This change might further the politicization of energy policy if CEAB were to become part of the executive branch. As a long time member of CEAB, I can tell you first hand that CEAB is a board that works well together and has healthy debates on the issues because of the very fact that its many agencies and stakeholders have differing responsibilities in the energy arena. This healthy tension among stakeholders promotes better decisions and better energy outcomes. One example is the successful implementation of the new Integrated Resource Plan ("IRP") process among other responsibilities given CEAB in PA 07-242.

OCC is always vigilant as to the burdens of new proposals on the utility ratepayers, particularly given this deeply troubling economic climate. It is not clear to OCC from this proposal how much and on whom the financial burdens will fall. It is clear in Section 17 however, that a new Clean Energy Technology Center and new Comprehensive Strategic Energy Investment Fund are to be created "through an expansion of the Renewable Energy Investment Fund". This is a ratepayer fund and it is critical to us all to know the magnitude of the costs that will follow from passage of this proposal on our constituents.

In summary, OCC would urge caution as we analyze further the benefits and burdens of RB 6633 in this difficult economy.