

South Central Connecticut Regional Water Authority  
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Testimony to the Government Administration and Elections Committee  
**Raised Bill 6375, An Act Concerning Review and Termination of Certain  
Boards and Commissions**

March 16, 2009

*The South Central Connecticut Regional Water Authority is a non-profit, public corporation and political subdivision of the State. Within the 20 member towns of our water district, we own and operate a public water system, which includes 18 reservoirs, 4 surface water treatment plants and 7 ground water treatment plants. We serve over 427,000 water consumers approximately 53 million gallons of water per day and provide fire protection throughout our service area. The source of this water is a system of watershed and aquifer areas that cover about 120 square miles within 24 municipalities. Over 27,000 acres of these watershed and aquifer areas are protected as open space as a result of the Authority's efforts while an additional 900 acres are protected with a conservation easement.*

The Regional Water Authority certainly understands the dire economic times Connecticut faces and the need for the General Assembly and the Governor to make tough decisions in trying to balance the State's budget for the next few years. We would, however, respectfully request that the Government Administration and Elections Committee retain a council and a committee which have been included for termination in HB6375.

First is the proposed elimination of the Connecticut Siting Council listed on line 257 of HB6375. Given the choice, everyone wants a scenic environment everywhere. Yet, everyone also needs and wants such things as a dependable supply of electricity and to be able to use their cell phones across the state. More than 30 years ago, the legislature made the tough decision to establish the Connecticut Siting Council as a result of the inability of state environmental protection, public utility control and local agencies to resolve the issues resulting from state-wide infrastructure requirements dealing with evolving technology and energy needs of the state's residents. In spite of this challenging responsibility, and although the Siting Council has occasionally hit a few bumps in the road, it has been successful in balancing the necessary developmental needs of the State's residents with the need to protect Connecticut's scenic, historic and recreational values. Additionally, it is our understanding that existing State Statutes provide that the expenses of the Council are covered by assessments and its fee structure.

Over the years, the regulation of water resources has faced similar obstacles. Water resource management in the state is currently handled by four state agencies with often conflicting legislative mandates. The Regional Water Authority believes if there was a similar overarching authority for water resources to the Connecticut Siting Council, many of the problems in water resources could be resolved. We understand that, according to HB6375, the Connecticut Siting Council would not be terminated until July 1, 2013. However, we hope the State will be able to reverse any action that may be taken this year to eliminate the Siting Council long before 2013.

Second is the proposed termination on lines 14 and 15 of the Face of Connecticut Steering Committee effective October 1, 2009. The Face of Connecticut Steering Committee was created during the 2008 session to fill existing gaps with new programs necessary to preserve our state's character as well as to manage and distribute funds for multi-purpose projects of special significance. Because funding for any programs beyond the existing programs was not available, there was limited ability for the Steering Committee to begin its work. However, now is the time for the Steering Committee to work together with members of the Face of Connecticut Coalition to provide the structure needed for its success. In that way, once additional funding is available, allocation of funding for those multi-purpose projects of special significance will be possible. To eliminate the Steering Committee now, when it is all volunteered time and no expense to the state, would be short signed.

Even during troubling economic times -- and perhaps even more so during these times -- owners of undeveloped land will be trying to sell their land as a way to make up for lost income or savings. When banks begin funding again, developers will be purchasing. Connecticut must make sure it positions itself now to ensure that Connecticut is the place that businesses want to grow and people want to live by continuing its commitment toward preservation of the Connecticut's open space and watershed lands as they become available.

Thank you for the opportunity to present our comments on Raised Bill 6375 and for your consideration of our recommendations.

Please contact Carlene Kulisch, Kulisch Consulting LLC, at 203-415-2359 or [kulischconsulting@sbcglobal.net](mailto:kulischconsulting@sbcglobal.net) for further discussion about RWA's comments on Raised Bill 6660.

*Member Towns: Ansonia, Beacon Falls, Bethany, Branford, Cheshire, Derby, East Haven, Guilford, Hamden, Killingworth, Madison, Milford, New Haven, North Branford, North Haven, Orange, Prospect, Seymour, West Haven and Woodbridge*