

COALITION OF CONNECTICUT SPORTSMEN

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Testimony presented to the **GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION AND ELECTIONS COMMITTEE**,
MARCH 16, 2009

**IN OPPOSITION to S. B. No. 839 AN ACT CONCERNING MERGERS AND CONSOLIDATIONS
OF VARIOUS STATE AGENCIES and
H.B. No. 6375 AN ACT CONCERNING REVIEW AND TERMINATION OF CERTAIN BOARDS
AND COMMISSIONS**

by Robert T. Crook, Director

SB 839 would have an immeasurable impact on Connecticut's law-abiding gun owners by transferring operations of the Board of Firearm Permit Examiners to the Department of Public Safety. "(a) There shall be established a Board of Firearms Permit Examiners, within the Department of Public Safety, [for administrative purposes only,] hereinafter referred to as the board"

The Board is the primary appeals process for those aggrieved by denial or revocation of Permits by police agencies. The oversight board was established 40 years ago as an independent agency because the police often abuse their discretion by making up their own rules and standards for firearms permits. The 7 unpaid volunteers receive NO compensation, an administrative part-time union secretary and office expenses costs the state little @ \$100,000. Placing the Board under the Dept of Public Safety and subordinating the Board to the State Police would save zero dollars. Most important, it would lead to a reduction in, if not an elimination of, the inherent fairness of the Board's operating principles which were put in place by the legislature to function as a Civilian Review Board. The public perception of the Board, as an independent autonomous body free from oversight and control of the DPS or the State Police, where any citizen can get a fair and impartial hearing, will be destroyed.

Putting the BFPE under the State Police will allow the State Police to control what is supposed to be an unbiased review of police actions. The State Police also will be able to rewrite the board's regulations, the rules that govern the board's procedures. The police generally prefer not to issue permits to civilians and clearly regard the board as an adversary; the enmity was intensified recently when a member of the board sued the State Police in Federal court in connection with his own permit. We consider this the first step toward the complete elimination of the oversight board, which the police regard as a nuisance at best.

If approved, an applicant who is denied a pistol permit would have to appeal to the very body, the Department of Public Safety, which rejected the permit. The removal of this currently independent board will make it harder for law abiding gun owners to regain their pistol permits if they have been revoked or denied without proper cause. We've heard of putting the fox into the chicken coop; this is putting the chickens into the fox's den.

Even more onerous is the provision under H.B. No. 6375 AN ACT CONCERNING REVIEW AND TERMINATION OF CERTAIN BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS (c) The following governmental entities and programs are terminated, effective July 1, 2012, unless reestablished in accordance with the provisions of section 2c-10: (1) Board of Firearms Permit Examiners, established under section 29-32b. Will an appeals process of over 40 years standing for those aggrieved by denial or revocation of Permits by police agencies be eliminated? We would predict more problems and costs to both citizens and the state were this implemented.

Thank you.