TOWN OF WINCHESTER – CITY OF WINSTED

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SB 373, SB 394, HB 5526, HB 5529 & HB 5537

Senator Coleman, Representative Sharkey and members of the Planning & Development Committee;

I am Keith J. Robbins, the Town Manager of Winchester, and I am here this afternoon to discuss various bills relating to the repeal of costly mandates put on cities and towns.

Today, in the current economic climate, when our resources are disappearing at an alarming rate, we should not even have to think about removing mandates. It should be done; as most of these mandates should not have been put in place to begin with.

The damage has been done in the past; but, there is time to reverse the trend and remove mandates that add to the cost of doing business for cities and towns, and do nothing to improve the quality of life for our residents.

For instance, **SB 373,** which would remove the mandate that cities and towns cart off, store, and then attempt to sell belongings of evicted tenants. This process requires the following resources: four or five members of the public works department with vehicles, at least a half day's time, storage space (if the town has it, otherwise, a storage rental unit), staff time to catalog the material, advertisement of the material, and then, when no one claims it, throw it all away. This is a great use of a town's limited time and dollars.

Another very helpful piece of legislation would be the passage of **HB 5565**, requiring a 2/3 majority of the assembly to pass any unfunded mandate or enlarge an existing mandate. If the mandate is such a fabulous idea, then 2/3 of the members should vote in the affirmative.

I live in the real world. I am not interested in asking for more State dollars because we have spent most of those, and now have a substantial operational deficit, not to mention a $52 billion long term unfunded debt. What I am interested in, is everyone using some common sense. We cannot afford, nor should we be ordered to perform these non-core services that take away from our true mission: education, transportation and public safety.

I will stand with any member of the body who is willing to vote in favor of mandate removal and/or against any new mandates. After all, if we cannot pay for it, it is not a good idea, no matter how wonderful some may think it is.

The above bills should be a slam dunk for passage. If not now, then when?
Subject to your questions and thank you for your time.

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