



## CENTRAL CONNECTICUT REGIONAL PLANNING AGENCY

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Testimony of Carl Stephani, Executive Director, Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency  
Planning and Development Committee  
March 2, 2009

My name is Carl Stephani.

I have been the Executive Director of the Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency for the past eight years.

My Agency supports many of the initiatives of the Smart Growth Task Force.

We regret having to make our initial comments about a bill sponsored by that group which we feel is poorly conceived.

I am referring to Raised Bill 6463

A little background is needed.

As you may know, there are 15 Regional Planning Organizations in the State.

There are three types of regional planning organizations: Councils of Governments (7); Councils of Elected Officials (3); and, Regional Planning Agencies (5 - involving the cities of Bridgeport, Bristol, Middletown, New Britain, Stamford, and others).

This Bill only deals with the 5 Regional Planning Agencies. My Agency, the Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency, is one of these five.

There are two aspects of the Bill about which I will comment.

### 1. Chief Elected Officials

This bill would require the chief elected officials from the towns under an RPA to be appointed as members of their RPA board. It does not allow such chief elected officials to designate alternates to attend meetings on their behalf.

Proposed Language

"Each member of a regional council of governments shall be entitled to one representative on the council who shall be the chief elected official of such member..." (Emphasis added)

The statutes regarding Councils of Government allow that "in the absence of any such chief elected official, an elected official appointed in the manner provided by ordinance of the legislative body of such member" municipality can be appointed to represent the chief elected official (CRS 4-124j) on a COG governing board. That option is utilized by nearly every COG in the state. It should also be allowed to chief elected officials under the jurisdiction of an RPA, as it is allowed under current statutes.

## 2. Governing Board Representation

Regional Planning Agencies are governed by boards whose members are appointed half by chief elected officials and half by planning Commissions.

### Current Statutes

"Section 8-31a. Formation of regional planning agencies. Representation.

...Each town, city or borough within such region, shall be entitled to two representatives on such agency and shall be entitled to additional representation on such agency at the ratio of one representative for each fifty thousand of population or fraction thereof over and above a population of twenty-five thousand as determined by the last-completed federal census. ... Where a planning commission exists in a town, city or borough established under the provisions of the general statutes or any special act, at least one of the representatives from such town, city or borough to the regional planning agency shall be appointed by such planning commission. The other representative or representatives shall be elected or appointed in the manner provided by ordinance adopted by the legislative body of such town, city or borough."

This bill would change those proportions to 2/3 chief elected officials and 1/3 planning commissions, and it would enlarge the size of RPA governing boards.

My Agency is more than 45 years old. I have never heard any board member, constituent, chief elected official, or anyone else ever mutter the slightest insinuation that there was a problem related to the fact that our chief elected officials did not have a heavy enough representation on our board. I have never heard any complaint from a legislator or anyone from any other municipality or regional planning agency about the fact that the chief elected officials of the region are inadequately represented on our Agency board.

If our municipalities would be significantly better served by an RPO governing board that was weighted heavier toward our chief elected officials I am not aware of the reasons why. No such evidence has yet been shared with the Connecticut Association of Regional Planning Agencies (to which I belong), nor was it shared with the Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee which in its December 2007 report entitled "Connecticut's Regional Planning Organizations" concluded that "all three types of Regional Planning Organizations currently allowed under Connecticut law ... should continue to be authorized."

Raised Bill 6463 would unnecessarily tamper with five successful cooperative intergovernmental organizations that have been serving their municipalities well for decades in the same form in which they exist today. These are responsive organizations that have the respect of their constituents. Now is not a time to tamper with the existing successful and effective regional planning agencies that we already have in place by changing the balance of representation to more heavily favor the chief elected officials.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

This Bill should either be dropped, or, amended to allow the same latitude to chief elected officials in RPA regions - to designate an alternate to represent them on their RPA governing board - as the statutes currently allow to chief elected officials under either regional planning agencies or councils of governments.