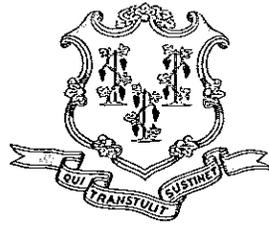


Room 3300
Legislative Office Building
Hartford, Connecticut 06106-1591



860-240-8600
Williams@senatedems.ct.gov
www.senatedems.ct.gov

State of Connecticut
SENATOR DONALD E. WILLIAMS, JR.
Twenty-ninth District
President Pro Tempore

Testimony of Senator Donald E. Williams, Jr.
Senate President Pro Tempore

On

Senate Bill 384: AA Promoting Regionalism in the State
Planning and Development Committee
March 2, 2009

Senator Coleman, Representative Sharkey and members of the committee:

Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of SB 384, *AA Promoting Regionalism in the State*.

It has been said, and I agree, that the map of Connecticut today, with its 169 distinct municipalities, looks more like 16th century England than a state in the 21st century. In order to grow their grand lists, our towns compete with each other to attract businesses and development, resulting in unnecessary town and state spending, duplicative development that ignores existing infrastructure and resources, and policies that encourage sprawl and the destruction of the character of communities. Towns should be working together on sensible development by prioritizing the use of existing transportation, commercial, and industrial infrastructure.

As we all know, our state is facing a budget crisis of historic proportion. Now is the time to re-examine our way of doing things. We must think more innovatively about the role of government and find increased efficiencies in how we provide services. There are a number of opportunities, including capital improvement projects and procurement, that municipalities can—and should—collaborate on, resulting in real savings for taxpayers. By relying on 169 separate “fiefdoms” to provide services and infrastructure for their residents, Connecticut will fall behind in the 21st century economy.

We value our quality of life in Connecticut and can preserve and enhance the quality of life if we work together. Local arts and cultural assets can be better promoted, shared and experienced throughout a region. Recreational areas can be more easily developed and maintained. Agricultural sustainability and food security issues can be addressed cooperatively and more effectively. Local natural resources, including our drinking water, can be shared and better protected when neighboring towns work together.

SB 384, *AA Promoting Regionalism in the State*, as well as many of the concepts in the bills on your agenda today, are steps in the right direction. This bill creates a municipal collaboration program that will encourage two or more towns to work together on things like capital improvement projects, cooperative and renewable energy projects, transportation projects, and educational services. The Office of Policy and Management (OPM) would administer the program and, within available appropriations, award grants to towns to help implement their plan and provide technical assistance.

I look forward with working with all of you to develop a common sense approach to regionalism in Connecticut.

Thank you for your time.