



**Transportation Committee
Public Hearing
March 11, 2009**

Support for Committee Bill 5660: An Act Authorizing the Use of High Occupancy Vehicle Lanes by Hybrid and Alternative Fuel Vehicles Containing Only One Person

Submitted by: Christine Halfar, Air Quality Specialist

The League of Women Voters of Connecticut is a non-partisan, statewide organization comprised of over 2,100 members and committed to effective public policy and the active involvement of citizens in their government. On behalf of the League, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to comment on this important issue.

Despite the economic downturn, Connecticut must continue to work to improve air quality standards. As a result of both DEP and federal EPA regulations, our air quality has improved substantially over the past 30 years. Nonetheless, Connecticut has the worst air quality of any state in the New England region. There are at least 15 days a year when the air in parts of Connecticut is unhealthy to breathe and another 64 days when it is only moderately good. Ozone is the pollutant of the greatest concern and the entire state is designated as “non-attainment” for ozone levels by the National Ambient Air Quality Standard (NAAQS).

Even a modest increase in fuel efficiency on our highways can result in substantial improvements in air quality which, in turn, leads to better respiratory health, especially for our children, who breathe more air than adults. According to the EPA the most fuel-efficient cars are also the least polluting, both in terms of toxins and particulate matter as well as climate-changing carbon dioxide.

This bill is a very low-cost measure to encourage the use of fuel-efficient vehicles. By recognizing the contribution of switching to a hybrid or alternative fuel car, we show our commitment to lowered emissions and cleaner air.

The League supports Committee Bill 5660. We believe that it will be another step toward reducing vehicular pollution and improving air quality in our state.

Thank you for your consideration.