



**State of Connecticut**  
**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**  
STATE CAPITOL  
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06106-1591

**REPRESENTATIVE GAIL K. HAMM**  
THIRTY FOURTH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING  
ROOM 4059  
HARTFORD, CT 06106-1591  
HOME: (860) 267-2799  
CAPITOL: (860) 240-8585  
E-MAIL: Gail.Hamm@cga.ct.gov

**CO-CHAIR**  
APPROPRIATIONS' HUMAN SERVICES  
SUBCOMMITTEE

**MEMBER**  
APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE  
EDUCATION COMMITTEE  
JUDICIARY COMMITTEE  
SELECT COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN

**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE TRANSPORTATION  
COMMITTEE**

**#H.B. 6056 (Comm.) - An Act Authorizing Bonds of the State for the  
Repair of the Comstock Covered Bridge Between East Hampton and  
Colchester**

**February 24, 2009**

---

Senator DeFronzo, Representative Guerrero, and distinguished members of the Transportation Committee, thank you for agreeing to raise House Bill 6056, "An Act Authorizing Bonds of the State for the Repair of Comstock Covered Bridge in East Hampton."

I come before you today to ask for your help in saving and restoring one Connecticut crown jewels. The Comstock Covered Bridge, located in East Hampton on the boundary of East Hampton and Colchester, is one of three remaining covered timber bridges in the state. It is the only covered bridge that still supports its own weight.

The bridge, which carries a pedestrian path over the Salmon River, is a two span structure approximately 131 feet in overall length. Those of you who are bridge buffs will appreciate this description—the main span of the bridge is a covered Howe Truss approximately 92 feet in length. Span 2 is a queen-post pony truss approximately 36 feet in length. Using a walkway down to the Salmon River, every year people come from far and wide to fish in the clear, pristine stream water or to enjoy our forest and sunlight.

Since 1791, this bridge has been used as a crossing over the Salmon River between our two towns. The present bridge, however, dates from 1873 when the Town of Colchester

Page 2.

and the Town of East Hampton (known as Chatham at the time) agreed to jointly share the \$3,958.59 cost to rebuild the bridge to such a width as "sufficient to take the water and ice through."

The builder of the Comstock Bridge is unknown, but the design chosen for the bridge, the Howe truss, was invented by William Howe (1803-1852), a carpenter-builder from Warren, Massachusetts. As bridge historian Eric Delony wrote, "the Howe truss may be the closest wood bridge design ever came to perfection. For simplicity of construction, rapidity of erection and ease of replacing parts, it stands without rival."

During the spring and summer of 2005 the bridge was closed because of fear that it would collapse into the river (DOT 28-192). Construction of an interim shoring system, consisting of external longitudinal and transverse steel beams made the bridge safe enough to be reopened. So, although my constituents can still use and enjoy the bridge, the job is not yet finished.

DOT advises me that the Comstock Bridge Restoration project is in final design and should be completed by August 2008. With the permitting process, the bridge should be completed in late 2010.

DOT applied for federal money under the Historic Covered Bridge Preservation Program in July 2006 but, success is still not known. This federal grant program only totals about \$14 million for the entire country and our chances are "iffy". Historic covered bridges aren't part of the transportation network and no other federal funding sources apply. Now, my wonderful historic bridge is in danger. This bridge is a symbol of Connecticut's heritage and rural charm! So, I come to you to ask for bond money, or perhaps simply a designation in last year's bridge repair bill.

Families and tourists from all over Connecticut and New England and- especially from East Hampton and Colchester ask for your support and help to save this historic "gem."

Thank you.