

**KATHLEEN KELLY ZABEL
FIRST SELECTMAN, TOWN OF BURLINGTON**

TESTIMONY REGARDING H.B. 6363

**“AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE GOVERNOR’S BUDGET
RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING GENERAL GOVERNMENT,
CONSERVATION, DEVELOPMENT, REGULATION,
PROTECTION, JUDICIAL AND CORRECTIONS”**

As the Chief Elected Official in Burlington, Connecticut, I understand the need for our State to find savings in all sectors in this economy. We, as towns and cities, realize we cannot expect to receive all of the aid we have in the past. My concern lies in the portion of H.B. 6363 designed to charge **54 towns that now subsidize 118 Connecticut State Troopers** at **70%** of their total package, to an increase of **85%** subsidy in fiscal 2009/10 and a **100%** final cost by the State and incurred to these municipalities in fiscal 2010/11.

Typically, the towns that use Resident State Troopers are not large and cannot bear the increased costs that H.B. 6363 would incur. None of us are, as a whole, in a position to establish our own Police Departments, but have been willing to not only carry the Resident Trooper Program as a large line item budget, but also add whatever technologies the State has required as necessary, thus relieving the State of that burden. The Governor must realize at this juncture, that these 54 towns will be forced, through this legislation, to reduce or eliminate their Resident Trooper program in order to continue to provide other necessary services to their citizenry.

As Connecticut towns face the possibility of the new reality of a reduction in our Resident Troopers, we are puzzled by how this will save the State money. At present, with **118 State Troopers being subsidized at 70%**, the **State of Connecticut is responsible for only 30% of their total package**. Should this section of H.B. 6363 pass, and towns be forced to reduce or close their Resident Trooper programs, the **State of Connecticut will have to absorb 100%** of the cost of their employment. Thus, the purported “savings” by increasing a subsidy to towns has the opposite effect. For example, should Burlington be forced by the sheer weight of the proposed local budget impact to reduce our Resident State Troopers by two, the State of Connecticut will have to absorb 100% of these Troopers. That would, just in one town, shift almost **\$200,000** onto the expense line of the State budget.

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In conclusion, and after working on many municipal budgets, it is obvious that the **State of Connecticut, by having towns subsidize 70% of even one Resident State Trooper, expends only a small share of this total State employee package.** The repercussions of putting many Troopers costs back onto the State will only increase the State deficit in this area. It is not something our 54 towns want to do in a time of recession and increased crime, but it is the only fiscally responsible action most, if not all of us can take. Losing seasoned officers who know our towns and the people in them cuts to the quick but we, as elected officials charged with the care of our populations, must be responsible to the local taxpayer who is also struggling in this economic climate. Your decision on this portion of H.B. 6363 is twofold. First, is this a true savings to the State or an action that will increase the State budget and in truth create a more fiscally volatile situation; secondly is the bigger picture, where you must decide whether you are providing the people your represent with the public safety necessary to keep our great State a place where people can expect their former level of protection. I ask you to weigh these issues against a very simple formula as noted before. **The State of Connecticut is presently responsible for only 30% of a Resident Trooper's employment package. Unless this percentage is left at the present rate, you will be adding 100% of the expense of any number of these men and women to the yearly recurring expense line item of the State of Connecticut.** One final note: all of our Resident State Troopers answer first to the State of Connecticut if they are needed for any reason and only after that do they assume the role of Resident State Trooper.

Thank you for your consideration and attention to this very important segment of H.B. 6363.