

TESTIMONY
of the
CONNECTICUT CONFERENCE OF MUNICIPALITIES
to the
ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

February 18, 2009

CCM is Connecticut's statewide association of towns and cities and the voice of local governments - your partners in governing Connecticut. Our members represent over 93% of Connecticut's population. We appreciate this opportunity to provide testimony to you on issues of concern to towns and cities.

CCM has significant concerns with several aspects of Governor's Bill 6371 "An Act Concerning Funding for the Department of Environmental Protection", and we urge you to make several changes to it.

This proposal would, among other things, redirect the funds from numerous environmental protection accounts to the General Fund.

While CCM appreciates the current fiscal problems faced by the State, this proposal contains several actions harmful to towns and cities:

Specifically,

(a) the Committee should **exempt municipalities from any increases in permit fees** (section 4). It simply makes no sense for one level of government to charge fees to another;

(b) Section 3 of the bill would administer the coup de grace to state payments to municipalities from the Boat Fund. It's a cautionary tale for those who propose to take away local taxing authority and replace it with state reimbursements -- first the reimbursements were frozen at 1978 levels, even as state revenue increased from registrations. Thirty years later this section would eliminate the reimbursements altogether.

➤ **This section should be deleted.** The least the State can do -- if it can't maintain the value of reimbursement for property taken off the tax rolls -- is maintain its promise to maintain the minimal values of 1978.

(c) CCM asks the Committee to thoroughly review changes proposed for the Underground Storage Tank program (beginning in section 32). As a separate fund, the program is able to be used by municipalities as a sort of insurance policy required by federal law. It is not clear whether eliminating the separate fund would endanger the ability of local governments to use it for this purpose, but capping reimbursement at the level of appropriations (line 1592) certainly raises a red flag regarding this.