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Date: February 23, 2009

To: Senator Daily
Representative Staples
Senator Roraback
Representative Candelora
Members of the Finance Revenue & Bonding Committee

From: E. Roger Williams

Re: S.B. 933 An Act Concerning the Governor's Recommendations on Revenue

My name is Roger Williams and I am writing in opposition to S.B. 933. Senate Bill 933 contains a proposal to place a cap on the television and digital media tax credit which ultimately will have a negative impact on the television production business in the State of Connecticut. My experience in television production in this state spans over 20 years. I am currently the principal owner of Roger Wilco Productions, located in Fairfield County. Since 2006, Wilco has been in the business of producing television shows for networks such as ESPN (non-sports programs), Discovery Networks and the VOOH HD network group (part of Cablevision). Prior to establishing Wilco, I was the Co-Founder and CEO of the Outdoor Life Network (now VS.) located in Stamford, CT. I was also the Co-Founder and COO of the Speedvision Network located in Stamford, CT. My tenure with these networks ran from 1995 until 2004. And from 1980 until 1992 I was part of the senior management team of ESPN with the responsibilities for sales and marketing functions. So I have had a successful and long history establishing and growing television businesses in the State of Connecticut.

When Connecticut first introduced these incentives, it attracted a tremendous amount of production work to the state. These credits incentivized my company to keep production work in Connecticut that otherwise would have gone to in New York. This program accomplished your goals of creating jobs and supporting the local economy (restaurants, hotels, etc.) with this influx of television production. This program also allowed my company (and others) to be more competitive with out of state production companies when selling programs to the various networks we deal with on an ongoing basis. In short, I can tell you unequivocally that this program has worked as intended and you should be complemented for its design and implementation. This program helped establish Connecticut as a real source of film and television production for the rest of the country.

Today, the economy has rapidly changed the rules for our industry. Networks have seen a rapid decline of 30% to 40% in advertising revenue. Layoffs are commonplace in the television business. Even ESPN has recently reduced its headcount. These economic pressures have resulted in reduced programming budgets for all television networks. In short, there are fewer dollars to go around in our industry. The tax credit program has now

become a real lifeline for the continued existence of this industry in Connecticut. It is basically our life support for the next few years. Without it, we will not be able to compete with production companies in other states that have similar tax credit programs in place or under consideration. The Wall Street Journal recently reported that 31 states now have tax incentives on the books for television and film production and 8 more states have proposed legislation for similar programs. Even California is now considering such a program in an attempt to bring the business "back home".

I know you have tremendous pressures with finding the right balance of spending for our state in these troubled times. But I would ask that you please consider keeping this important and vital program for our industry. It is a program that worked as planned and ultimately returns to our state tenfold the cost. Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

E. Roger Williams