



February 24, 2009

Co-chair Thomas Colapietro
Co-chair Jim Shapiro
Senator Kevin Witkos
Representative Penny Bacchiochi

General Law Committee:

I am submitting testimony in support of H.B. 6470, AN ACT CONCERNING RESIDENTIAL RETAIL HEATING OIL AND PROPANE CONTRACTS.

The Independent Connecticut Petroleum Association (ICPA) represents over 550 petroleum marketers and their associated business in Connecticut. ICPA members employ over 13,000 people in our state and provide our fellow citizens with heating oil and moor fuels. Our heating oil dealers serve 682,000 consumers with heating oil, approximately half of which operate with contracts for their product deliveries.

The original statute we are proposing to amend today came about through a collaborative effort involving our association, the Department of Consumer Protection and the Office of the Attorney General. The heating oil dealer registration law of eight years ago, and its subsequent amendments, has succeeded in strengthening consumer protection and raising the level of corporate responsibility and behavior in our marketplace. Our law has become the model for laws recently passed in Vermont, Maine and other states in the northeast.

ICPA provides education programs to teach companies how to prepare valid contracts and further has issued a written Member Services Bulletin to guide companies on how to write valid contracts that are in compliance with the law. Contract issues are, more often than not, at the heart of the conflicts that arise between consumers, companies and government so it is in all of our interests to make the protocols for valid agreements as absolutely clear as possible.

We are here today with regard to the sections of the bill that pertain to electronic contracts. The Office of the Attorney General and our industry has made considerable progress on protocols for what constitutes a valid contract under various state and federal electronic commerce statutes.

Thank you for your work on this legislation, and we thank the Office of the Attorney General for their time and effort to work with us in arriving at suitable protocols for what constitute valid agreements that protect both consumers and the companies that offer them.

Please support H.B. 6470, AN ACT CONCERNING RESIDENTIAL RETAIL HEATING OIL AND PROPANE CONTRACTS.

Respectfully,

Christian A. Herb
Associate Director