

Litchfield County Fire Chief's Emergency Plan, Inc.
Burrville Fire School
P. O. Box 335
Pleasant Valley, CT 06063

February 3, 2009

Members of the Public Safety Committee,

I would like to speak in favor of several raised bills before you today. I am the Training Captain for the West Hartford Fire Department, President of the Barkhamsted Fire District, Secretary of the Connecticut Fire Department Instructors Association, member of the Education Committee of the Connecticut State Firefighters Association, and the School Director for the Burrville Fire School. From each of those positions I see the importance of these bills.

Raised Bill #759 is the authorization of bonds for the projects identified in the Connecticut Firefighters Education Committee Facilities Study conducted by the Department of Public Works in 2001. These funds would go for the rebuilding of the regional fire schools. These schools out lasted their useful life. The regional fire schools have worked hard to keep them running, but there is only so much you can do with facilities that are old and rundown. The regional fire schools have been working together since 1999 to develop this plan.

Of the eight regional fire schools identified in the plan, only two still have structures in which they can still conduct live fire training. Live fire training is needed for not only initial firefighter training, but for annual training as required by OSHA. As the Training Captain of the West Hartford Fire Department I receive numerous requests each year to use our small burn building. This building was not designed for this type of training. We allow other departments to use our facility because it is the only live fire training they may receive. My concern is that this use will eventually leave West Hartford without a facility. The point I am raising is simple, the few facilities that we have in Connecticut that can still conduct live fire training are being over used by the many fire departments that need training. They will be worn out prematurely.

Travel distance to a usable burn building is another concern. The Burrville Fire School is located in the northwest corner of the state. Many departments are forced to drive long distances in order to get their needed training. Others are just not doing the training. Litchfield County has departments that need to travel up to an hour and half each way. That is three hours additional hours these volunteers must be away from their families. If the Burrville Fire School was forced to close, which would mean initial firefighter training would jump from 200 hours to 350-400 hours.

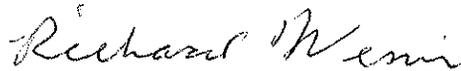
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Raised Bill # 6286 would also be a benefit. Many fire departments have or would like to have programs to assist our residents with the installation of smoke and carbon monoxide detectors. The fear of being held liable for damages keeps many departments from assisting. The assistance is important for our elderly citizens that can not do the installation themselves.

The last bill I would like to your support on is Raised Bill # 6289. Presently fire departments can get reimbursed for one-half of the tuition to send a firefighter to Firefighter I or recruit school. This bill would allow additional levels to be included in this reimbursement. Many fire departments do not have the funds to pay for the higher levels of training. That forces firefighters to pay out of their own pockets. Many of these are volunteers. The additional levels being included in reimbursement would make it easier for the fire departments to afford this training.

I thank you for your time and hope you will support these bills. If you have any questions please feel free to contact me.

Respectfully submitted,



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