

# The Connecticut General Assembly

Senator Andrea Stillman – 20<sup>th</sup> District



Good afternoon, Senator DeFronzo, Representative Guerrero, Ranking, and other members of the Transportation Committee. My name is Andrea Stillman, the state Senator from the 20<sup>th</sup> District, and I'm here to promote SB737, An Act Authorizing boy Scout Troop 24, East Lyme, To Operate a Coffee Stop at the Waterford Weigh Station on I-95 on Labor Day Weekends.

This bill was introduced – and co-sponsored by more than a dozen legislators, I will add – to perpetuate a 25-year tradition that has inexplicably fallen out of favor by the Rell administration. Last summer, for the first time since President Reagan's first term, there was no rest for the weary along I-95 to accommodate Labor Day travelers. Last summer, because the DOT arbitrarily decided to rescind its permission, local Boy Scouts and their adult supervisors were prohibited from providing this valuable public service.

As co-Chair of the Public Safety Committee, I seek favorable action on this bill because it helps keep drivers on a major thoroughfare – on one of the busiest weekends of the year – alert and alive while traveling through our state. Coffee and doughnuts are available, and a brief conversation with these volunteers can rejuvenate those with many miles to go.

As a member of the southeastern Connecticut community, I seek favorable action on this bill because I know firsthand how gratified the Boy Scout troop is to provide this service, and I know firsthand how grateful local charities are when the scouts donate the contributions they receive. In 25 years there were never any accidents, injuries, or other incidents to cause concern, protest, or cancellation.

The DOT's decision seems random and unfounded, as if by some unfathomable fit of upside-down logic these scouts and their leaders, who look forward to doing this each year, are somehow doing something wrong, all evidence to the contrary.

Consider for instance Governor Rell's commendation received by the troop just 18 months ago. Consider the DOT's own improvements made previously to the site, adding outdoor electrical outlets to spare the continuing need for a portable generator. Consider – please – the numerous stories and editorials published and broadcast in support of the program, when this seemingly prejudiced decision was made last summer.

Perhaps most importantly, consider the rich irony in the DOT's decision to suspend this program 'for safety reasons,' when the undeniable result of that decision is the unsafe condition and greater safety concerns posed by drowsy drivers and inattentive passengers. The DOT says the Boy Scouts can't operate their camp overnight, *precisely* when its services are needed most.

Please restore some common sense to this circumstance and act favorably on SB 737 so East Lyme's Troop 24 can resume doing its good deed, to the benefit of Labor Day travelers, local charities, and by extension, the entire state of Connecticut.

Thank you very much.

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*Andrea Stillman represents the 20<sup>th</sup> Senatorial District, which includes New London, Waterford, East Lyme, Old Lyme, Old Saybrook, Salem and Montville.*