

Catholic Cemeteries Association
OF THE ARCHDIOCESE OF HARTFORD, INC.

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CRAIG S. NEAL
Executive Director

February 3, 2009

Re: **Proposed Bill No. 5138 – “AN ACT CONCERNING THE PLACEMENT OF UNITED STATES FLAGS ON VETERANS’ GRAVES.”**

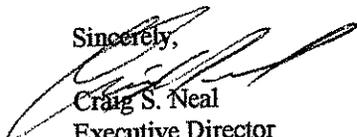
Good afternoon ladies and gentleman. Thank you for taking the time to review my concerns. As Executive Director of Catholic Cemeteries Association of the Archdiocese of Hartford, Inc., I am here today to voice my opposition to Proposed Bill No. 5138. In addition to my position with the Association, I also serve as Vice President of the Connecticut Cemetery Association, as a board member for the New England Cemetery Association, and as a committee member for the National Catholic Cemetery Conference.

The Association maintains its headquarters and corporate office at 700 Middletown Ave., North Haven. The primary function of the Association is to oversee the maintenance and operation of 29 cemeteries within the jurisdiction of the Archdiocese of Hartford. It is always our goal to provide dignified and well-maintained resting places for our faithful departed and their visiting family members.

With this in mind, please note that the month leading up to Memorial Day is a most critical time of the year for a cemetery. It is at this time that we are completing our spring cleanup and “shifting into high gear” with Mothers’ Day and Memorial Day, two of the busiest days of the year for a cemetery, in the forefront of our operations. To this end, we have asked the Veterans’ groups to refrain from placing the flags in mass quantity until after 12:00 PM on the Saturday before Memorial Day. This allows our employees to mow, trim, and prepare for the holiday without the additional interference of hundreds or even thousands of flags on gravesites. While we have the utmost respect for the American flag, which we permit on the gravesites for the remainder of the year, this Bill, if enacted, will create a maintenance nightmare during Memorial Day preparations and ultimately have a negative impact on the appearance of our properties on Memorial Day.

Lastly, current State Statute 19a-297, which states that all American flags and flag holders are not to be removed unless unserviceable, must be taken into consideration. The proposed Bill contradicts this Statute. Furthermore, it does not address who will be responsible for the removal of the flags following the 4th of July, if enacted. Regardless of who will be responsible for the removal, it will be impossible to discern if a flag was placed by an organization or a private family member. If the organizations were to remove personal flags, which are permitted to remain in accordance with 19a-297, our cemetery offices will be inundated with irate, grieving family members. This would place an unfair additional burden on our administrative staff.

It is for the above reasons that I respectfully request that you vote NO with regard to House Bill #5138.

Sincerely,

Craig S. Neal
Executive Director