

RAISED BILL No. S.B. 126 AN ACT ADDING WOOD SMOKE TO THE PUBLIC HEALTH NUISANCE CODE AND CONCERNING OUTDOOR WOOD-BURNING FURNACES.

Chairs Senator Ed Meyer, Representative Richard Roy, and Members of the Public Health Committee:

My name is Beth Terra. I come before you as a resident of the town of New Hartford, CT., a health care professional and a victim of outdoor wood burning furnace emissions.

This proposed Bill, if enacted is a much needed step in the right direction. I strongly support Section 1 of the bill which if adopted, amends the Public Health Code to include wood smoke as a public nuisance as it relates to outdoor wood burning furnaces.

However, I do take exception with Section 2 of the Bill. As proposed Section 2 prohibits the use of outdoor wood burning furnaces for the period of April 15 through October 15 annually, with an exemption for agricultural uses. I ask, "What should the public do to protect themselves during the other six (6) months of the year?" For this Bill to effectively protect the health and welfare of the class of individuals it was designed to protect, it must be a total ban enforceable year round with the agricultural exemption.

This is the second year in a row, I have come before you, seeking your help in protecting my health, my family's health and the health of many others facing the same plight in the state of Connecticut. More specifically, my family and I are constantly being exposed to wood smoke generated by a neighboring outdoor wood burning furnace.

We purchased our home seven (7) years ago, in a town that promoted many outdoor activities, protected state forests, conservation programs, clean air, many reservoirs and streams for swimming, kayaking, and fishing among other things. However, two years ago a neighbor began utilizing an outdoor wood burning furnace. Shortly thereafter, my yard and interior of my home started becoming polluted with smoke and strong smells. On days with lower clouds, the smoke does not dissipate and remains at ground level. Perhaps you recall how it feels on summer days when the air is oppressive and hard to breathe. Imagine that with a smoky, eye irritating sensation, in February. I rarely let my children play outside now.

I contacted the town officials for help and spoke to zoning officials, the selectmen and also attempted to get the Fire Marshall involved. They all directed me to the State of CT Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). I subsequently filed a complaint with the DEP. Initially, DEP responded and found the outdoor wood furnace in violation along with permits that had not been obtained thru DEP or our town. It appears that they had a smoke stack that was too short on the furnace. The stack was increased in height, but we are still bombarded daily by the unhealthful emissions. The DEP directed me to call in a complaint every time we are under siege by the smoke and smell. I have complied by making complaints. I have only heard of DEP responding 4 times. The response is also many weeks after the complaint. I attempted to provide them with photographs and video to substantiate my complaints, since they never respond timely, but they have refused to take my evidence.

Since the instillation of the outdoor furnace, my now 10 year-old, son who suffers from asthma has had increased visits to the pediatrician and has had to go on steroid and nebulizer treatments. Our newly adopted son is experience upper respiratory, throat and eye irritation as is the rest of the family. I myself have had continuous hacking coughs, headaches and sinus infections on a regular basis. We have all been treated and continue to be treated by our physician for these ailments, that are preventable! It is not a cold. It is similar to being exposed to second hand smoke on a regular basis.

With nowhere else to turn, I even contacted the Farmington Valley Health Department for help. They advised me that without wood smoke being added to the nuisance code, they have no jurisdiction over the problem and that I should continue calling in nuisance complaints to the Connecticut DEP.

In connection with this Bill, some will present you with statistics on the rising complaints to DEP and town officials who constantly respond in kind to citizen complaints, that the state statutes are insufficient for them to take meaningful enforcement action. Others will explain that the outdoor wood burning furnaces are poorly designed and permits the emission of toxic fumes into the air. Scientific reports will present you with a laundry list of the dangerous composition of the toxic fumes. But, I would hope that Attorney General Richard Blumenthals' public call for the outright ban statewide, of the use of outdoor wood burning furnaces in December 2009 should carry some weight in your decision process regarding this Bill. More specifically, the Attorney General stated that the same toxins and carcinogens found in cigarette smoke are also found in the outdoor wood burning furnace emissions at issue here. In the present day, those who avail themselves to the hazards of cigarette smoke have an option since there are current statutes to protect the public at large. However, we are being exposed to the same hazards not by choice, twenty-four (24) hours a day and seven (7) days a week.

I have sought the advice of an attorney, but I am beginning to hear that other homeowners are not succeeding down that road. As you will hear from proponents of the Bill, the state of Washington has banned outdoor wood burning furnaces. Closer to home, the more responsive towns of Granby, Tolland, Hebron, Woodbridge, South Windsor, Portland, Ridgefield, Norfolk, Salisbury and Haddam, did not wait for your intervention and enacted their own municipal bans of the outdoor wood burning furnaces. Some residents are now the victims of unequal treatment, since some towns are banning the furnaces and some are not. We call upon you to take action and protect the health and welfare of all residents of Connecticut, uniformly across the board. Clearly, your actions will have an impact on medical expenses and future breathing ailments related to outdoor wood burning furnaces, that are preventable.

We call for your help and support in amending the nuisance code and enacting an outright ban on outdoor wood burning furnaces in Connecticut.

Thank you for your time and any consideration in this matter.



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2/11/09

4:59 PM

Smoke from owl.

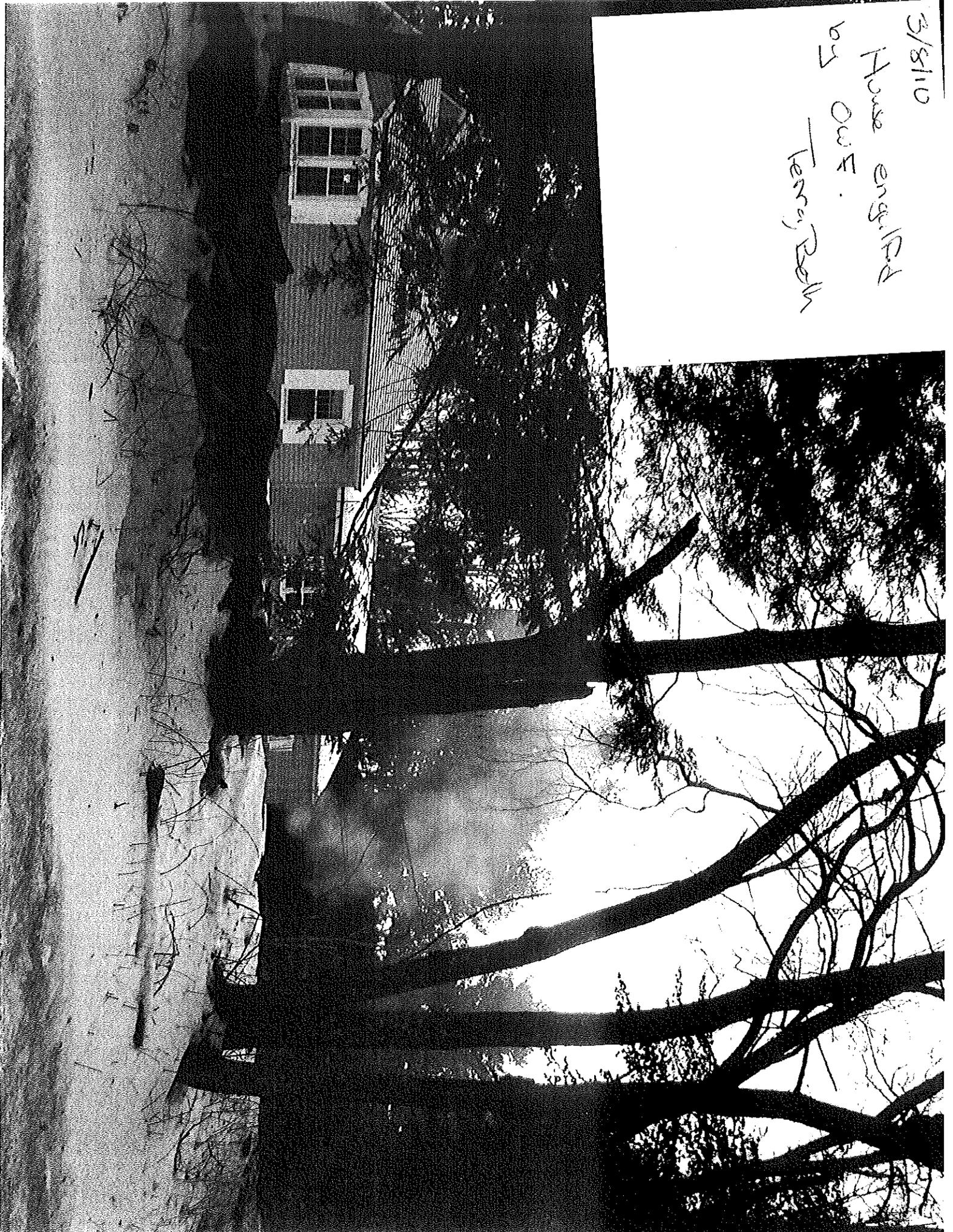
Terry, Beth

3/8/10

House enlarged

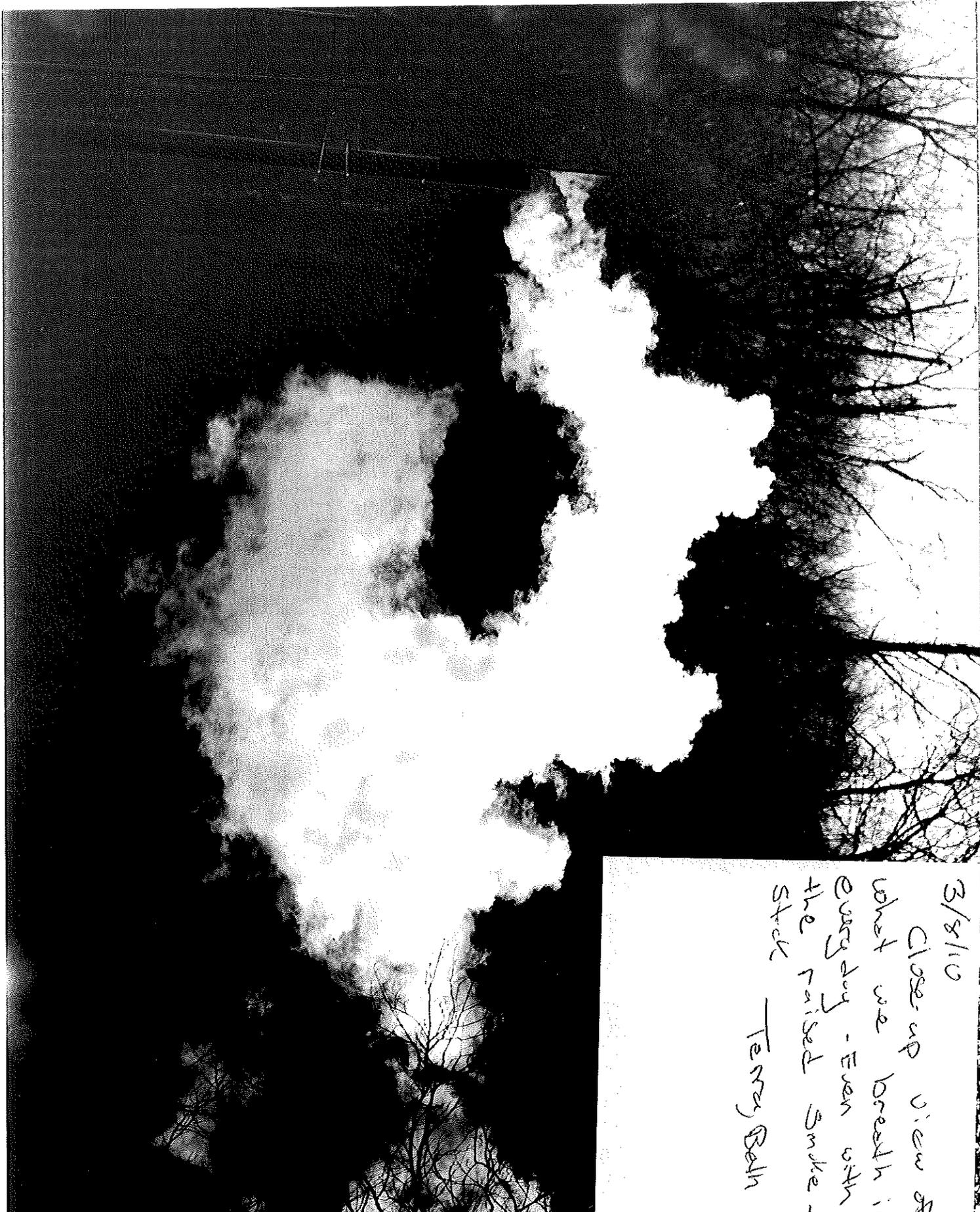
by OWE.

Henry, Beth









3/8/10
Close up view of
what we breath in
every day - Even with
the raised smoke -
stick
Tenny, Beth