



## Connecticut Association of Assessing Officers, Inc.

David M. Dietsch, President  
City of Waterbury

Walter Topliff, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President  
Helen Totz, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President  
Lawrence G. LaBarbera, Treasurer  
Stuart Topliff, Secretary

To: Labor and Public Employees Committee

From: David Dietsch Assessor, City of Waterbury  
President Connecticut Association of Assessing Officers

Date: 2/17/2010

Re: HB 5059 - Municipal Assessor Appointments

My name is David Dietsch. I am the assessor for the City of Waterbury and the president of the Connecticut Association of Assessing Officers. I am here today in support of HB 5059.

This bill can stand on its merits alone when you realize the benefits it will produce like attracting a better pool of applicants for open positions and maintaining equity in our tax base. While we would all want to believe that the assessment process is fair and equitable, I would like to tell you first hand of the pressures I received to either circumvent the process or face not being re-appointed.

When I started as the Assessor in 1996 things were not as they are today. The City was delaying revaluations for decades. In lieu of the revaluation the administration chose to embark on a city wide personal property auditing program. This process allows an assessor to do a three year audit of business equipment.

We audited 2000 accounts and discovered \$8,000,000 in additional taxes. One of the accounts that we had audited was a friend of the Mayor. I was called in and asked to make it go away. I almost fell off my chair. The same administration that initiated the auditing program now wanted me to sweep something under the rug and treat one taxpayer differently. I explained the law needed to be applied equally, but in those closed door meetings, none of those things mattered. The more I resisted the worse it got. I was insulted, belittled, berated and a carrot of a re-appointed dangled before my nose. "You're not a team player" kept getting thrown out there and at the time, I didn't fully understand.

From that point on, the retaliation began. Funding for my office was shut off. I could no longer get any of the tools needed to keep the office functioning properly. Requisitions for every thing from personnel to paper and pencils were suddenly stuck in limbo.

The retaliation continued and escalated, but I am very proud to say that I did not succumb to those pressures. It was not easy. I was in a living hell that adversely affected my health and well being. But my story has a happy ending. The federal government was already investigating corruption in the city and fortunately I no longer work for that administration. There is no telling where I would be if this Mayor had not gone to prison. Some of my colleagues have not been as lucky and have lost their jobs merely for being ethical.

For every assessor who was not re-appointed, there are several who faced political pressure/intervention in the assessment process but left willingly for another job or another profession.

I'm here today with my current Mayor's blessing. He truly supports the efforts we assessors go through every day trying to maintain a stable tax base that is fair and equitable and free from political duress. We ask your committee to please support HB 5059.