

Council 4 AFSCME supports:

H.B. No. 5337 (RAISED) AN ACT AUTHORIZING TWO OR MORE MUNICIPALITIES TO PURSUE JOINT EMPLOYEE HEALTH INSURANCE PLANS.

Council 4 strongly supports this bill. It makes good economic sense for the state and municipalities to pool health care as much as possible. Evidence shows that the state health care plan costs far less per family or individual than do comparable municipal plans. We believe that what makes the most sense is for the state to open the state health care pool to the municipalities. In a time of such economic crisis it is a wonder that this has not been done yet.

S.B. No. 394 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING THE GOVERNANCE OF THE CONNECTICUT RESOURCES RECOVERY AUTHORITY.

We find this to be an interesting bill and would support it moving forward. There are major problems in the way that the CRRA is run. Council 4 gave testimony (attached) before the Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee on Monday on the shoddy operations, lack of accountability, willful disregard for public information requests and other goings on at CRRA. Something must be done to bring public accountability to this agency.

Council 4 AFSCME opposes:

S.B. No. 198 (RAISED) AN ACT REQUIRING A TWO-THIRDS VOTE TO ENACT NEW MUNICIPAL MANDATES.

We believe that tampering with the General Assembly's rules and requiring a super majority in such a case is unwarranted.

H.B. No. 5255 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING MUNICIPAL MANDATE RELIEF.

This bill would force state marshals to store the possessions of evicted residential tenants, rather than the municipalities as is now the law. The marshals lack the ability and resources to store such possessions. The marshals are not set up to provide such a service. We believe that the current system, as imperfect as it may be, is the best way to handle this situation. Council 4 also believes that municipal legal notices should be left in newspapers. It is important for government to remain as open and accountable as possible to the public. Bad contracting and rental deals have been discovered and thwarted because members of the public observed them in legal notices. The internet does not offer a like opportunity to the public.

H.B. No. 5031 AN ACT REDUCING COSTS TO MUNICIPALITIES.
Council 4 opposes this for the same reasons as we cite for HB 5255.

Council 4 AFSCME Testimony – March 8, 2010

SB 267, An Act Implementing the Recommendations of the Program Review and Investigations Committee Concerning the Role and Purpose of the Connecticut Resources Recovery Authority

Good afternoon Chairman Mushinsky, Chairman Kissel and members of the Program Review and Investigations Committee. My name is Brian Anderson. I am the lobbyist for Council 4 AFSCME, a union of 35,000 public and private employee members.

I am here to testify in regards to **SB 267, An Act Implementing the Recommendations of the Program Review and Investigations Committee Concerning the Role and Purpose of the Connecticut Resources Recovery Authority**. It is very advisable to study the role and need for CRRA. It is also advisable to study the way this state agency has operated.

I am introducing parts, and have the whole, of PRI's September 23, 2008 public hearing transcript. Tom Kirk, the president and person at the top of CRRA's overall operation testified explicitly that he opposes privatization at the Mid-Connecticut Project at that PRI hearing. He said repeatedly at the hearing that he opposes the privatization of this facility, including saying "With private control, a supply-constrained market will allow Connecticut capacity to be used for other states' waste, leaving Connecticut consumers dependent upon and paying more to ship their waste to environmentally less desirable landfills hundreds of miles to the west."

In a case of taking an action directly opposite to what he told the legislature, Mr. Kirk put out two RFQs on September 14, 2009 that solicit parties to privatize the operation and management of the Mid-Connecticut Project. The Mid-Connecticut Project is currently run under the supervision of CRRA and MDC government employees. These employees don't serve the profit motive, but the public safety motive. Just over a year ago the CRRA let two of the four resource recovery facilities, that it was supposed to control, slip into private ownership. The CRRA continues to try very aggressively to break a contract that it has with the Metropolitan District Commission to operate the Mid-Connecticut Project so that it can fully privatize out the facility's operation. CRRA has spent over \$1 million in ratepayer funds to break the MDC contract in order to facilitate this operational privatization. It has privatized out part of the Mid-CT Project's operation already – and with disastrous results. CRRA chose the Covanta corporation to run the boiler operation at the Mid-CT Project. Since Covanta has been on the job the boilers have been operated very poorly or been shut down for long periods of time. This has cost the ratepayers money.

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Now, due to CRRA's action or inaction, two private corporations with troubled histories run most of Connecticut's resources recovery infrastructure. One is Covanta. This corporation is involved in the management and operation of four of Connecticut's six resource recovery facilities. The other is the Wheelabrator Corporation, whose parent company is Waste Management, Inc. It runs the other two facilities. Both of these corporations have bad financial histories. Covanta went bankrupt in 2002. The Virginia-Pilot newspaper reported in 2006 that one "well-known financial advisor this year labeled the company a bad risk." In 2001, the Chicago Tribune reported that Waste Management, Inc. "agreed to pay \$457 million to settle a class action lawsuit that alleged it violated federal securities laws." Both of these corporations have been cited numerous times for pollution. Both have records of not listening to citizen and government complaints when asked to stop polluting.

Privatizing the Mid-CT Project will be bad for rate payers and the state's citizens – who CRRA is supposed to serve and protect. This begs if there is any accountability at all at the CRRA, or is there a feeling that because they claim "quasi-public" status, although they are clearly an instrumentality of the state, that they can do anything they wish. It also seems that Governor Rell pays little attention to that agency. A recent Courant article by Jon Lender, reporting on the lack of response to major theft of CRRA ratepayer equipment by management, follows a pattern.

Another example of CRRA's ethically challenged operation is their refusal to answer even simple questions from the public. Our unions asked for information relating to actions that CRRA has taken that are carefully shielded in their meeting minutes – which we believe violate state law on agency transparency. I provide a copy of our request and their answer refusing to give information that is supposed to be open to the public. Another request that we have made is for the salary, perks, benefits, expenses and contract that Mr. Kirk enjoys. Again, CRRA has refused to give us this. We asked for this after Mr. Kirk called for our truck drivers and machine operators, who work under very hazardous and unhealthy conditions, to give up a 3% COLA that was part of a three year MDC contract. It only seems fair that we should see what his COLA is for the same period, yet he has refused to give us this. Perhaps this committee would have more luck at getting an answer to such a request.

Such shaded and shoddy operation, coupled with a growing lack of faith in CRRA displayed by over 40 Connecticut municipalities, and the privatization of most of their agency function may well beg the question of should CRRA continue to exist. I would be happy to answer any questions.