



**State of Connecticut**  
**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**  
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Testimony  
House Bill 5417  
Environment Committee

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**CONNECTICUT MUST PROVIDE ATVERS WITH A LEGAL  
PLACE TO RIDE!**

Good Morning Chairman Roy, Chairman Meyer and members of the Environment Committee. For the record, my name is Steven Mikutel, State Representative for the 45<sup>th</sup> Assembly District.

It's good to be back before this committee of which I was a member some 15 years ago.

I am here today to testify on the all-terrain vehicle (ATV) problem/situation confronting our state and to offer a solution.

As you well know, the overwhelming majority of ATV operators do not register their vehicles because they have no place to ride legally. They say it is pay with no play (taxation without recreation?). In order to encourage legal operation the state would have to open some state land to ATV riders.

The reality is that people are driving their ATV's illegally on private and public land. Some prime examples in my area are in the Pachaug State Forest and Green Falls in Voluntown. Private land owners are upset about damage to their land but there is very little they can do about it. The problem is not going away. There are about 70,000 ATVs (DEP estimate) in Connecticut and more to come. It's time to address this matter once and for all.

While the popularity of the sport has sky-rocketed, Connecticut has done little to support ATVers. In fact, it has willfully neglected its legally mandated responsibility (C.G.S. 23-26) to provide places for ATV recreation. DEP's failure to implement its legal mandate is serving to make criminals out of our constituents.

There would be many benefits from allowing ATV riders on state land. It would bring in millions of dollars in new registration fees. It would curb illegal riding. It would turn the industry into a safer sport by offering safer riding areas. It would actually reduce environmental damage by permitting trails to be established only where it is most appropriate, after environmental

review. Finally, it would help the state's economy as a lot of businesses prosper from the sport whether it is local motels, gas stations, restaurants, etc.

I would suggest that most of the registration fees on ATVs be given to the DEP to establish an ATV Division whose charge would be to create and maintain trails, aid ATV enforcement, and fund related tasks such as safety and education classes. I would also suggest that a land purchase fee be attached to all ATV registrations, the proceeds of which would be used to purchase land specifically for ATV operators.

New Hampshire has instituted such a model and it has proven to work for the benefit of residents and the environment.

The ATV Division could be similar to DEPs very successful Boating Division. The boating division is funded through the registration of vessels. A similar system could work for ATV administration.

With the establishment of such a body to oversee the use and safety of ATV operations, I believe everyone stands to benefit. If ever there was a win win situation, this is it. On the other hand, if we continue business as usual we will only see more property owners frustrated because government offers no viable alternative to the destruction of their property by ATVs.

