

Testimony

MARCH 18, 2010

TO: ENERGY AND TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE

FROM: CHRISTOPHER von KEYSERLING
P.O. BOX 35, COS COB, CT 06807
203/869-0282; cvonkey@gmail.com

RE: H.B. No. 5504 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING SITING OF CELL TOWERS NEAR SCHOOLS.

Mr. Chairman and Esteemed Committee Members:

I am honored to be able to confer with you on the important matter of Cell Tower siting, the Connecticut Siting Council, and public safety in our schools.

H.B. Bill No. 5504 performs a sensible adjustment to the necessary process of siting cell towers within communities. This Bill helps the Siting Council, the school parents, the Federal communications network, and our citizenry.

You legislators are too senior and involved in local matters to be unaware of the challenges to cell tower sitings. Quite the contrary, you are better informed than many who testify before you on the problems, technically and politically, which such an infrastructure placement stirs up in a community. You know that all of this frustrated vitriol ends up in the Connecticut Siting Council's public hearings.

You know that the federal Telecommunications Act of 1996 has deemed a national cellular communications network a federal priority for defense, security, and operational imperatives. This is why the Connecticut Siting Council has virtual and real supremacy over any local, and even state, authority.

But, the Connecticut Siting Council has an ugly job of continuously denying local opponents, out right and without recourse. This leaves your electors and neighbors frustrated, angry, and disgusted with their government. They feel stripped of their Constitutional rights, ... disenfranchised.

This Bill helps the Connecticut Siting Council trim a large part of its most contentious work. As elected officials and community leaders yourselves, you know that there is no force in local government as virulent and intractable as parents of school children.

First, the State forces, under threat of punishment, their children to attend schools, usually the one nearest school. Then those same children are subjected to hazards and possible health damage. (I know, the Federal bureaucracy has declared health risks off limits.)

Second, the Siting Council plops a Cell Tower next to the school which is usually centered in the most dense, residential areas of town. Now the parent's home is devalued, constituting a de facto "taking" of the single, capital asset of that school family.

Third, those parents are forced to spend a small fortune on legal fees and expenses to battle the siting, all to no success.

Fourth, the stricken school suffers student flight, which causes further devaluation of neighborhood homes. The school's student mix becomes imbalanced, and the State Board of Education steps in to correct a minority imbalance, which the Siting Council has myopically set in motion.

The result of a Cell Tower proposed next to a school, any school, is a predictable, protracted, expensive, nasty battle with the Connecticut Siting Council (not the cell provider).

This Bill would not only be fair to the greatest part of your constituency; Safeguard our children and their educational system; Stabilized real estate values and local tax base; It helps the Connecticut Siting Council by removing one of the main and unnecessary areas of contention from their table.

This Bill 5504 does not interfere with the federal policy of establishing a continuous cell communication network. There are plenty of potential cell tower locations outside the 750 foot circles of sanctuary for our school children.

The Communications Industry and the Connecticut Siting Council will not be hampered in their goals and duties. Yet the public will feel that the State of Connecticut, the Federal Government, and the independent Siting Council are no longer deaf slabs of indifferent stone.

With the adoption of Bill 5504, the Connecticut Assembly, you, can provide a simple, yet tremendous service to your constituents, the citizens of Connecticut, our children and teachers, and the Connecticut Siting Council.

Thank you for your generous consideration.

Christopher von Keyserling
Cos Cob, CT