



M. JODI RELL  
GOVERNOR

STATE OF CONNECTICUT  
EXECUTIVE CHAMBERS

**TESTIMONY OF  
M. JODI RELL  
GOVERNOR**

**TO THE  
PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE  
March 10, 2010**

**IN SUPPORT OF GOVERNOR'S BILL:  
5031 - AN ACT REDUCING COSTS TO MUNICIPALITIES**

Senator Coleman, Representative Sharkey and members of the Planning and Development Committee, I know you share my concern that the state's budget crisis will make it difficult, if not impossible, to sustain municipal funding at the level we all would prefer. It is imperative; therefore, that we do what we can to provide our cities and towns with cost reduction opportunities, which is why I proposed AN ACT REDUCING COSTS TO MUNICIPALITIES.

Each of the provisions in this bill resulted from a recommendation made by the Municipal Mandate Reform Work Group that I established last year – a work group comprised of state legislators and municipal leaders who were asked to submit ideas on how to mitigate the impact of potential state aid reductions through mandate relief measures.

As you know, enactment of Governor's Bill No. 5031 will allow for alternatives to disseminating printed town reports, allow savings in terms of the cost of newspaper notices by providing municipalities with the authority to post certain notices on their websites, allow municipalities to avoid the cost of removing, storing and selling the possessions of evicted tenants by transferring that responsibility to a state marshal, and will delay in-school suspension requirements for another two years. In addition, the bill will authorize establishment of Municipal Employee Retirement Fund C, which will provide opportunities for greater municipal cost savings in terms of employee retirement benefits. The bill contains other relief measures that the Municipal Mandate Reform Work Group requested as well as the requirement that both chambers of the General Assembly vote to enact any new, costly mandate on municipalities by a two-thirds vote of their members.

Undoubtedly, there are provisions in Governor's Bill No. 5031 that seem familiar. My 2009 proposal contained some of the same provisions and separate bills on your agenda today (SB 197, SB 198 and HB 5225) include the same or similar proposals. Additionally, the Municipal Opportunities and Regional Efficiencies (MORE) Task Force recommended some of these same mandate relief provisions in findings announced last week. The fact that so many individuals and groups are proposing the same (or similar) mandate relief provisions underscores their importance.

The economic crisis that struck Connecticut and the nation nearly a year and a half ago continues to negatively impact state revenue. The level of funding we were able to provide our cities and towns in the budget approved last year, together with efforts municipal leaders made to reduce spending, allowed them to avoid having to increase property taxes significantly. While together we have labored to maintain this level of aid, the simple fact is that we cannot spend what we do not have.

I know that you share my respect for the daunting challenges municipal leaders face during these difficult economic times, as they strive to hold the line on property tax increases. For years, our municipal leaders have expressed concerns that unfunded state mandates have costly consequences for local taxpayers. It is more imperative than ever that we provide them with cost savings opportunities. To that end, I ask that you support the mandate relief proposals in Governor's Bill No 5031 and work diligently to ensure its enactment during the current legislative session.