



March 10, 2010

Testimony Regarding

- P. S. B. 144, **An Act Concerning Enhanced Regionalism**
- S. B. 159, **An Act Concerning Inter-municipal Cooperation And Enhanced Regionalism**
- S. B. 197, **An Act Concerning In-School Suspensions**
- S. B. 198, **An Act Requiring A Two-Thirds Vote To Enact New Municipal Mandates**
- S. B. 303, **An Act Concerning a Municipal Hotel Tax**
- H. B. 5255, **An Act Concerning Municipal Mandate Relief**
- H. B. 5257, **An Act Concerning The Termination Of New Municipal Mandates**
- H. B. 5331, **An Act Authorizing Municipalities To Join In State Contracts For The Purchase Of Services**
- H. B. 5336, **An Act Concerning Shared Services**
- H. B. 5337, **An Act Authorizing Two Or More Municipalities To Pursue Joint Employee Health Insurance Plans**
- H. B. 5383, **An Act Concerning Regional Economic Development**
- H. B. 5031, **An Act Reducing Costs to Municipalities**

Made before the

Planning and Development Committee

The Northeastern Connecticut Council of Governments (NECCOG) **SUPPORTS** the concepts put forth in the twelve proposals before the Committee today and urges the Committee's **favorable consideration**. Most of the proposals are the result of the **Municipal Opportunities and Regional Efficiencies (MORE) Commission** that Speaker Donovan created and Representative Sharkey lead. NECCOG participated in Phase I of the MORE Commission and will continue its participation in Phase II. The MORE process is a unique (and we hope one that will be repeated) approach to problem solving for our state – engaging local elected officials, regional representatives, business, unions and others with legislators to enhance dialogue between various interests and find solutions or at least the opportunity for solutions. We thank the Speaker for his leadership and Representative Sharkey for his tireless efforts in making the MORE Commission work.

NECCOG, as a regional organization of 12 municipalities, has a long history of embracing regionalism. This includes regional programs in **Engineering, Paramedic Intercept, Animal Services, GIS** and our newest venture in conducting **Revaluation** regionally. Our member towns are open to the possibilities that regionalism affords -- not just in terms of savings, but from the efficiencies gained resulting in better services for our residents. The bills before you are an enhancement to our efforts and those being done and tried in other parts of our state.

Initial financing for regional and inter-municipal cooperation is a critical issue and present challenge to those seeking such opportunities. Proposed Senate Bill 144, **An Act Concerning Enhanced Regionalism**, Senate Bill 159, **An Act Concerning Inter-municipal Cooperation and Enhanced Regionalism** and Senate Bill 303, **An Act Concerning a Municipal Hotel Tax** would address the issue and greatly enhance our ability to pursue regional opportunities.

Mandates (most of which are well intended) cost our towns considerable resources. Relief from the costs related to many of these can be of great financial benefit to our towns – especially during the financial situation we find our state in at this time. House Bill 5031, **An Act Reducing Costs to Municipalities** (introduced by the Governor), House Bill 5255, **An Act Concerning Municipal Mandate Relief**, House Bill 5257, **An Act Concerning The Termination Of New Municipal Mandates**, Senate Bill 197, **An Act Concerning In-School Suspensions**, and Senate Bill 198, **An Act Requiring A Two-Thirds Vote To Enact New Municipal Mandates** seek to address the mandate issue for municipalities. We do wish to emphasize that some mandates (such as the in-school suspensions) have a strong policy basis and should not simply be thrown aside due only to financial implications to towns. We need to work together to find affordable/effective ways to address the issues that resulted in the mandates.

As noted earlier, NECCOG is a strong advocate and practitioner of regionalism. We strongly support initiatives that enhance those efforts. House Bill 5331, **An Act Authorizing Municipalities To Join In State Contracts For The Purchase Of Services**, House Bill 5336, **An Act Concerning Shared Services**, House Bill 5337, **An Act Authorizing Two Or More Municipalities To Pursue Joint Employee Health Insurance Plans** and House Bill 5383, **An Act Concerning Regional Economic Development** each furthers efforts and opportunities to enhance regionalism.

Regionalism provides the opportunity for the towns of our state to save resources and enhance the delivery of services to the people of our state. Much is being done through our RPO's, RESC's, and between towns on a formal and informal basis.

Successful regionalism will have to come from grass-roots efforts among municipalities to work together, not a top-down mandate to change. Toward that end, efforts are best focused on devising systematic incentives to encourage cooperation.

"Forum: Why regionalism is so hard" by Christopher Briem, Sunday, July 09, 2006, Pittsburg Post Gazette

What we need in Connecticut is the environment to allow the opportunity of regionalism to flourish. The bills under consideration today further that goal – we urge your favorable consideration.

Thank you.

For More information, please contact:

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