



State of Connecticut
SENATOR DONALD E. WILLIAMS, JR.
Twenty-ninth District
President Pro Tempore

Testimony of

Senator Donald E. Williams, Jr.
Senate President Pro Tempore
Tuesday, March 8, 2011
Commerce Committee

Senator LeBeau, Representative Berger and Members of the Commerce Committee:

I submit this testimony in strong support of HB 6528 AN ACT CONCERNING BONDING FOR BROWNFIELDS.

First I want to thank this committee for its continued work on brownfield remediation. I know this is an issue that is especially important to Rep. Berger and I commend the chairs and committee members for your efforts.

Brownfields in Connecticut represent an untapped economic development resource for our urban areas. And, by reusing already developed areas, we are able to preserve the open spaces that make Connecticut so special.

The Connecticut General Assembly has fully embraced smart growth principles and brownfields are an important part of this plan. We can't continue to plow under cornfields. Rather, we must create jobs and opportunities in our urban areas where the infrastructure already exists. For too many years we have encouraged growth in remote areas, destroying farmland and beautiful vistas, and then waited for the roads and other infrastructure to catch up. This is expensive, environmentally unsound policy.

As the article "Reviving Brownfields," in *The Connecticut Economy* (Winter 2011) states, "Returning brownfield properties to productive use is a key component of 'smart growth' principles."

Job creation is critical in our urban areas. All of Connecticut's major cities have double digit unemployment rates. According to the Connecticut Department of Labor (December 2010), Hartford has a 15.7% unemployment rate, with Waterbury at 13.7% and New Britain at 12.6% not far behind. These rates are devastating to these communities and to our state economy.

This bill builds on the past work of this committee in two critical ways.

First and foremost, it makes a substantial financial commitment to brownfield remediation. The bonding authorizations in this bill, \$10 million in each year for the next ten years, will go a long way to getting these properties back in business. For many years we have talked about brownfields; this bill demonstrates Connecticut's commitment to reclaiming them.

Last year, we in the General Assembly worked hard to make the tough choices to cancel \$422 million in previously authorized bonding. These cancellations brought Connecticut comfortably under our bonding cap so that we could focus on job creation projects that we all agree should be our priority during this economic crisis. This bill advances the goal of job creation.

Secondly, while we have had a priority list in the past, this bill provides that we take a full inventory of our brownfields. According to *The Connecticut Economy*, the State of Connecticut and EPA have identified 299 brownfield sites, but in fact there may be as many as 13,000 of them. From this inventory, we will prioritize reclamation based on three criteria:

- Economic development viability;
- Geographic diversity; and
- Environmental urgency.

I urge you to support this bill so that we better prioritize brownfield redevelopment and invest adequate resources in brownfield cleanup. This will preserve our environment, restore jobs to our urban centers, and advance our implementation of smart growth principles.

Thank you for your consideration.