

**Testimony of George M. Camp  
Before the Environment Committee  
in support of  
H.B. 6263**

Dear Co-Chairmen Senator Meyer, Representative Roy, and Members of the Environment Committee:

I am a "10 Mill landowner" in Middletown, and am here to testify in support of H.B. 6263.

Landowners in the 10 Mill program like me have made a 100-year commitment to protecting our forest lands. This long-term commitment was originally incentivized by keeping property taxes low at the 10 Mill rate. However, on the 50-year anniversary of being in the program our property taxes are likely to increase dramatically if both our standing timber and property were to be re-assessed and taxed based upon current "developable" land values (even though we have no intentions to develop it and further doing so would be in direct conflict with the easement we have conveyed to the Connecticut Forest and Park Association which ensures, we thought, that it would remain in perpetuity protected from commercial or private development).

The significant rise in property values over the last half-century could not have been foreseen either by the State or by the landowners who originally entered into this 100-year agreement. Because it is important to the people of Connecticut that forest land be protected from development, and that doing so does not place a catastrophic financial burden on 10 mill landowners, an option other than the complete elimination of the incentive is needed. Thankfully, H.B. 6263 provides such an option.

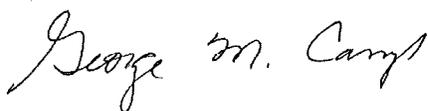
H.B. 6263 suggests a common-sense compromise that would allow property taxes to increase upon the 50-year anniversary in the program, but in a way that sensibly caps them at the same per-acre rate paid by other forest landowners in the Public Act 490 program.

Our forest is approximately 250 acres in size, and became part of the 10 Mill program in the 1960's when my parents saw the degree to which small parcels of open land were being consumed for commercial and residential purposes, leaving fewer and fewer open spaces for citizens to appreciate and enjoy. Rather than selling the land to a developer they decided to forego the financial gain from such a sale by ensuring that the forest land remained open and protected. At my father's death in 1995, the Connecticut Forest and Park Association accepted our offer of an easement on the forest land to forever maintain it for forestry education and other open spaces purposes.

Our forest lands provide multiple benefits to our community by providing habitat, cleansing air and water, and maintaining our town's rural character, as well as furthering the mission and goals of the Connecticut Forest and Park Association. If our property taxes increase beyond the P.A. 490 rate, it would unfairly penalize those of us who have made this long-term commitment to forest conservation. Indeed, our forest lands are already protected by the prospect of large penalties if we were to either withdraw from the program or change the current forestry use of our property. Again, it is not our intention to change the forestry use of our property, but it would be sadly ironic if the 50-year anniversary property tax increases under 10 Mill forced us to either sell or develop our properties to pay the bill.

Therefore, please support H.B. 6263, which would 1) make it easier for us to maintain our long-term commitment to forest conservation by capping our property taxes at the P.A. 490 rate upon our 50-year anniversary in the program, and 2) provide 10 Mill landowners who are willing to place a conservation easement on their properties with the flexibility to keep their lands in 10 Mill or transition into P.A. 490 without a financial penalty.

Thank you very much.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "George M. Camp".

George M. Camp