



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

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TESTIMONY

DATE: February 9, 2011

PRESENTED TO: Environment Committee
Connecticut General Assembly

PRESENTED BY: Karl J. Wagener
Executive Director

SUBJECT: Raised Bill 830, An Act Prohibiting the Use of Certain Outdoor
Wood-Burning Furnaces

The Council was made aware of the problems of smoke from Outdoor Wood-Burning Furnaces (OWFs) through complaints as well as personal observations by Council members. We have reviewed numerous reports on the subject. The Council recommends that the General Assembly 1) direct the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to adopt regulations for the installation and operation of OWFs, and 2) enact a moratorium until such time as regulations are adopted.

The Council asks the Committee to keep in mind two points that sometimes do not get enough attention in the debate:

1. OWFs place a burden on the DEP, and ultimately the taxpayer, by requiring the DEP to respond to complaints. Hundreds of complaints have been logged to date, and the number will likely swell into the thousands if OWFs proliferate. The DEP points out in its September 30, 2010 Permitting Assessment Report that the Department is not even well suited to respond to complaints about OWFs. It would be a mistake to allow complaints to multiply.
2. The fact that OWFs in some circumstances operate without generating complaints or perhaps even excessive pollution is not wholly relevant, when the basic design of OWFs make it so easy for them to generate excessive pollution. This is especially true when the existing statutory setbacks and other provisions are somewhat arbitrary, a one-size-fits-all approach that will not always protect public health.

The Council is aware that some people operate OWFs to save money. There are numerous devices that people theoretically could buy and use to save money, such as cheap cars and small diesel pick-up trucks available in other countries, that we simply do not allow because they do not meet standards that we have established to protect human health.

Standards are the key. We do not know if a newer generation of OWFs could be built and operated to meet appropriate standards, but it is the approach that we as a state usually take to control pollution sources, and it is the approach that would be appropriate for OWFs.