

Testimony on Behalf of the
Connecticut League of Conservation Voters

Environment Committee -January 31, 2011

My name is David Bingham. I serve as a co-chair of the CT League of Conservation Voters, and speak in support of Raised Senate Bill 834.

Margaret Minor, executive director of the Rivers Alliance could not be here to testify. She has asked me to note that SB 834 would provide many benefits for the rivers of CT. She has submitted separate testimony.

SB 834, ostensibly, is AN ACT CONCERNING MUNICIPAL OPEN SPACE. As such it would enable our towns and cities to create a separate dedicated fund from a local conveyance fee, for purchasing and protecting open space - a Community Green Fund, if you like.

However, this bill is far more than that. Much of what such a fund could provide for is green jobs, jobs, jobs!

Section 1.2 specifically provides funding for brownfield remediation, a necessary but costly and labor-intensive activity.

Under Section 1.3 municipalities could also fund "other environmental projects." This language is too vague. We believe the bill should specify other job-creating conservation projects eligible under the bill, including proposals for

- water treatment and storm sewers,
- clean air projects,
- energy conservation,
- alternative transportation infrastructure,
- historic preservation
- green building retrofits.

Municipalities have significant responsibilities in all of these conservation areas.

Too often these projects are delayed or abandoned for fiscal reasons. Yet the health and safety of the public is at stake.

And our municipalities must be environmentally sustainable to be economically sustainable.

Thus, this not just an open space bill, but a major jobs bill, a bill to allow communities, if they so choose to use this funding tool for smart growth and combating sprawl while improving the value of local real estate and development.

Local seed money for such projects leverages many times its local cost, bringing in grants from many sources, and lowering borrowing costs. Failure to have a local fund often forecloses the possibility of matching grants.

In sum, this is a bill that provides a tool for communities to be good stewards of the land, while providing funds for meaningful jobs that make our communities more vibrant and healthy.

CT LCV stands ready to work with the committee to help make this bill more specific and strengthen its benefits. Clear language should avoid the need for OPM oversight, which encumbers the bill.

Thank you. I would be happy to entertain any questions regarding the League's support for SB 834.