

Frank Chiaramonte
1st Selectman, Town Of Harwinton
Before the
Environment Committee
January 31, 2011

RE: *SUPPORT* – SB-831 - AN ACT CONCERNING LIABILITY PROTECTION FOR RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES ON OPEN SPACE LANDS

I urge lawmakers to *support* SB-831, which would extend the Recreational Land Use Act to municipalities to encourage towns to continue to make open space lands available for recreation.

Our town prides itself on providing opportunities for residents and visitors to enjoy our recreational facilities. The town maintains a Conservation/ Recreation Area which provides hiking trails, a pavilion with picnic tables, a pond that is stocked with trout each spring, three tennis courts, a playground, and a sand volleyball court.

We are concerned, however, that increased liability costs may force us to consider limiting access to these facilities. Faced with trying to budget for increased costs in the areas of education, road repair, health care, labor costs and more, towns like Harwinton may have very few options for reducing costs.

Increased liability concerns will also be an important factor in determining whether we should move forward with any new recreational facilities or the purchase and protection of open space lands. Open space lands and ponds and other water resources can be difficult to monitor to ensure the safety of recreational users. Many small towns simply don't have the resources to ensure that trails are always free from fallen limbs or debris that may pose a safety risk to hikers and bikers.

As a result, many communities are considering or have already begun to restrict access to open space lands. To address these concerns, we urge you to **support SB-831 AN ACT CONCERNING MUNICIPAL LIABILITY FOR RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES ON CERTAIN OPEN SPACE LANDS**, which extends limited liability protections that are enjoyed by private landowners that make their land available to the public without charge to municipalities.