



State of Connecticut

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State Representative Arthur O'Neill
Joint Committee on Energy and Technology
Public Hearing Testimony
Thursday February 3, 2011

Good evening Senator Fonfara, Representative Nardello, Senator Duff, Representative Reed, Senator Witkos, Representative Hoydick, and Committee on Energy and Technology Membership:

I would like to thank the Committee on Energy and Technology for raising House Bill 5207, An Act Concerning A Special Electricity Rate For Seniors Who Heat Their Homes With Electricity, for public hearing.

As you may know my district includes Heritage Village condominium development which is the oldest and largest in our state. Within the development, there are 2,500 units. In accordance with the times, Heritage Village relied on electric heat, with built in radiant heating elements embedded in the ceiling. As you can imagine, the electric bills are astronomical. Typical bills can easily reach \$800. At one time, in recognition of this tremendous burden, the State did provide a discounted electric rate for people who used electricity with which to heat. Exacerbating this situation, is that Heritage Village is an age restricted community, and thus all of the 4,000 residents are at least 55 years of age or older. While some members of the community are financially well of, most are on a fixed and comparatively low income like most seniors in Connecticut.

At the time of deregulation of the energy industry, I and many of my constituents were lead to believe that restructuring would reduce electric rates. This has obviously not happened for various reasons, and while having one of the highest electric rates in continental United States is a burden to everyone, it is especially onerous to seniors on fixed incomes.

I recognize that the legislature has a tremendous press of business, especially relating to the State's budget and that decades ago, the state delegated the authority to the Department Public Utilities Control (DPUC), and its predecessors, to develop appropriate electric and other utility

rates. That is why I proposed HB 5207 which does not mandate a change that would merely shift the problem from one place to another, but rather calls upon the DPUC to initiate a rate case which would give all interested parties a forum to develop a fair and sustainable solution to this problem.

I thank the Committee for raising this important bill and ask that it be given a favorable report. I am sure that this statute will reduce the financial burden of many seniors, especially ones on a fixed income.