

Testimony of Daniel C. Esty

Committee on Executive and Legislative Nominations

March 10, 2011

Thank you co-chairs Senator Looney, Representative Janowski, ranking members Senator Fasano and Representative Piscopo and members of the committee. It is a great honor to appear before you today as Governor Malloy's nominee for the position of Commissioner of Environmental Protection.

I appreciate the confidence Governor Malloy has shown in me by selecting me to serve the people of Connecticut during this time of transition.

As you know, Governor Malloy is seeking to expand the DEP into the new Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP). If enacted, the Governor's proposal will be an important step forward for our state.

As outlined by Governor Malloy when he presented this concept, DEEP will

"...enable the state to continue its environmental conservation and regulation functions and to couple them closely with energy policy and pricing."

I share the Governor's vision.

I see energy and the environment as two sides of the same coin. I look forward to working with the Governor and the General Assembly to make this new agency a reality.

But the business before you today is my nomination as Commissioner of Environmental Protection.

Let me share with you some detail about my qualifications to lead DEP and my vision for it.

I have a long-standing and sincere concern for our environment and how we, as stewards, protect our natural resources for future generations. This has been the focus of my professional life for more than 25 years.

Early in my career I worked at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). While at EPA, I served as Special Assistant to the Administrator, Deputy Chief of Staff, and the Deputy Assistant Administrator for Policy.

As Deputy Assistant Administrator for Policy, I oversaw the cross-cutting issues of climate change, transportation, agriculture, trade and energy--- and the connection of these to the environment. I managed a system of cross-checks on all regulations, supervising teams for air, water, waste, pesticides, and toxic substances.

I have also dealt with environmental and energy issues from a national and international perspective as an advisor to President Obama's election campaign and his transition team.

On the local level, as a member of Cheshire's Planning and Zoning Commission, I have seen the effects of land use decisions on a community and was able to develop a perspective of the impacts these decisions have at that level. It also left me with a deep appreciation of the effects that environmental policy has on economic growth and job creation.

For the past 17 years I have been a professor of environmental law and policy at Yale University. Most recently I served as the Director of the Yale Center for Environmental Law and Policy and also the Director of the Center for Business and Policy at Yale. This experience provided me with the opportunity to analyze the complex environmental issues we face as we strive to maintain the significant successes we have achieved while transforming the way we look at the future.

At Yale, much of my research has focused on the importance of understanding the business/environment interface.

Most recently, I co-authored (with Andrew Winston), *Green to Gold: How Smart Companies Use Environmental Strategy to Innovate, Create Value, and Build Competitive Advantage* – discussing the financial advantages that come with making environmental sustainability part of core business strategy.

And I have worked with numerous corporations to help them embrace the link between business success and environmental sustainability.

When it comes to the DEP, the mission of the agency is perhaps the most varied of any state agency.

From stocking trout to monitoring air emissions, from holding ice fishing classes to holding polluters accountable, the DEP's role is incredibly diverse.

The businesses that come before us for permits see us as regulators. But the vast majority of our residents and visitors see us as a gateway to getting outside. They see us as the folks who maintain and protect our beautiful state parks and forests for hiking and camping and our rivers and streams and Long Island Sound for fishing, boating and swimming.

I want to make certain DEP continues to meet our core responsibilities by building on efforts to streamline permitting and enforcement processes while meeting our obligation to uphold environmental laws, safeguard resources and protect public health. We need to harness the power of technology and creative approaches to accomplish this.

We must also continue to provide outstanding state parks and outdoor recreation opportunities for our citizens, maintain our state forests, and manage wildlife in a sound and scientific manner.

There is no doubt that our state government faces extraordinarily difficult times; however, as an agency, we are determined to continue fulfilling our mission, notwithstanding current fiscal constraints. Achieving this goal requires us to look inward, to make certain we are operating as effectively as possible, as well as look outward, and to engage all possible partners in our efforts.

The Governor has made clear the importance of driving economic growth and creating jobs. DEP must also be a partner in this and pursue our work with an eye on how we will contribute to the state's economic revitalization.

As I mentioned earlier, Governor Malloy's proposal to reorganize DEP into DEEP is to give coherence to state energy policymaking, to ensure that we think systematically about the environment and energy together, and to achieve both better policy results and greater efficiencies in the years ahead.

But, as we move toward a "Double E" structure, I want to emphasize a third "E" -- the Economy. I share the Governor's belief that a commitment to job creation needs to be our top priority -- and deeply believe that environmental progress is much easier to achieve when the public feels confident about the economic future.

The addition of the "third E" - the economy - to our mission means that we as a department will become even more critical to the State's mission. We have an opportunity to help establish a clean technology and energy economy in Connecticut, which would bring jobs to the state, increase the quality of life for all of our residents, and establish Connecticut as a leader in the next great American economic growth opportunity.

This added dimension is not just consistent with, but reinforces our department's vitally important work of conserving our precious natural resources and championing pollution control in a manner that ensures Connecticut's leadership on issues of environmental stewardship. And you have my commitment to work with each of you to ensure that the reorganization entailed by the creation of the new DEEP will be done in a fashion that is minimally disruptive to our ongoing critical work and does not compromise our environmental mission.

There is a widespread recognition today that it just makes good business sense for companies to be "green." And my goal as Commissioner will be to make Connecticut a national leader in integrating environmental, energy and economic policies -- something that is just not happening yet at the state or national level.

In pursuit of this agenda, I have identified four themes that I will build into the culture of DEP in the months ahead:

Innovation

In these difficult times, we will need fresh thinking and a commitment to new ways of doing business -- and to promoting creativity and the entrepreneurial spirit in our communities and business sector.

Integration

As we bring energy and the environment together along with a commitment to pursuing our policy goals in a manner that contributes to economic growth, we can achieve added leverage by working with other state agencies, from Transportation to Public Health to Economic and Community Development, as well as local officials and community groups, federal authorities, environmental leaders, academic and research institutions, and the business community.

Investment

While we are living in difficult financial times, we must do what we can to enhance the resources available for our core priorities. We can do this with new federal money, improved efficiency in how we carry out our business, and some reprioritization and redeployment of our existing funds.

Inspiration

We are the guardians of an extraordinary set of natural resources in a beautiful state. We must continue working to expand access to and utilization of our parks, forests, lakes, rivers, and the ocean, encouraging every citizen to become more active and connected to the Great Outdoors.

The Connecticut DEP has long been a national leader in environmental policy to protect our resources as well as the health and well-being of our citizens.

The federal Clean Air Act was modeled on ours. Our state parks and forests system is among the oldest in the country.

We have led on the regulation of solid waste and hazardous waste management; we have led in protecting the water quality of our rivers and streams. We have led in ensuring every state resident, from New Haven to Newington, from Bridgeport to Burlington has the opportunity to get outside and discover our beautiful state.

Even in these difficult financial times, I am committed to ensuring CT continues to set the pace on energy and environmental issues.

With your support, I very much look forward to addressing these challenges as Commissioner of Environmental Protection and ultimately the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection. I thank you for this opportunity to address your committee and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.