

**House Bill 6600, An Act Implementing the Recommendations of the
Legislative Paperless Task Force and the Task Force to Study the
Reduction of State Agency Paper and Duplicative Procedures
Government Administration and Elections Committee
March 21, 2011**

My name is Matthew Hallisey. I am director of government relations and legislative counsel for Connecticut Construction Industries Association in Wethersfield. I am a past president of the Association of Connecticut Lobbyists and a member of that organization. For about 12 years, I have represented organizations as a lobbyist in the state and, prior to that for about two years, I worked on staff at the General Assembly in the Legislative Commissioners' Office. I am testifying on my own behalf.

House Bill 6600, An Act Implementing the Recommendations of the Legislative Paperless Task Force and the Task Force to Study the Reduction of State Agency Paper and Duplicative Procedures, makes a number of amendments to statutes to implement the paperless task force. The task force arose out of a bill adopted in the middle of the 2010 session (Public Act 10-3). This is the first real opportunity for the public to comment in a public hearing on proposed legislation related to the efforts of the General Assembly to implement its paperless initiative.

While I am generally supportive of many of the task force recommendations and much of House Bill 6600, I respectfully request that members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee carefully monitor its progress and implementation, mindful of the importance of transparency and the public's need for information and access to important documents.

I am keenly aware of the significant state budget challenges confronting lawmakers and the fact that you need to close a substantial gap for the next fiscal year. I appreciate the admirable goal of increasing efficiency and reducing waste, especially when a great deal of legislative information is available on the General Assembly homepage. Additionally, many lawmakers have shown a strong commitment to transparency and openness in state government by enhancing the legislature's website, keeping information current and accessible and making the homepage user-friendly.

Some of the changes in House Bill 6600 make sense and will likely save the state resources. Section 11 of the bill, for instance, would eliminate the requirement for a specific number of copies of the revised statutes and public and special acts to be printed for various agencies, while giving Legislative Management some discretion in the process, and legislators would be sent sets of statutes only upon request.

However, I am very concerned that, by eliminating the daily printing of offset copies of loose bills, bill booklets, calendars and other information that was formerly readily available, the public's ability to access information has been impaired. While much of this information is readily available to the public at the click of a mouse, not everyone in the state has the capability or means to access information electronically.

Moving away from printed materials diminishes transparency and accountability and generates additional cynicism in the public; also, it undermines their ability to follow and understand the lawmaking process. Indeed, not all members of the public have laptop or tablet computers that would enable them to access materials, and there are only a limited number of computers and printers in the state Capitol and Legislative Office Building that are available to the public. Reading bills online is not the same as reading the printed version. Even if all members of the public had laptop PCs, there may not be sufficient resources at the Capitol or LOB to accommodate all users.

Reducing sets of other materials that were printed just last year may not save the state as much money as is projected. Indeed, it could have the unintended effect of generating more printed copies and slowing down the legislative process. Also, there should be consistency in making such materials available. File copies, along with other documents, are available to members of the public who rent a bill box, but the Bill Room provides some of the same documents at no cost.

In implementing the task force recommendations and House Bill 6600, I would urge the committee to recommend a policy so there is consistency among committees related to making substitute language available to the public electronically in a timely fashion. Perhaps section 5 of the bill could be amended to require committees to make bills reported favorably available within 24 hours of final action. Additionally, Wi-Fi access should be enhanced. The legislature's external website has been down occasionally during the session, making it difficult to access materials online at the General Assembly homepage.

Please contact Matthew Hallisey at 860-529-6855, if you have any questions or if you need additional information.