

Testimony of Ms. June Lape before the Connecticut  
Legislature's Housing Committee in Support of House Bill #6461  
March 1, 2011

Hello, my name is June Lape. I am a public housing resident in Wallingford, CT. I am a member of the Board of the Wallingford Tenant Council, an independent resident association affiliated with the Connecticut Public Housing Resident Network, Inc. (PHRN), representing all 317 families living in Wallingford's six public housing communities.

I am here to speak in favor of House Bill # 6461 on behalf of the entire Board and resident membership of our organization.

In Wallingford, our Town Council appoints the Resident Commissioner who serves on the housing authority's board.

In 2009, believing that a new Resident Commissioner should be a resident of *our* choice, we encouraged one of our resident leaders to step forward for consideration for the vacated Resident Commissioner position. Five Democrats were Town Councilors at the time; four Republicans were Town Councilors. Pat Hogan, our resident leader, was able to win the Resident Commissioner appointment, but only after winning a vote from the 85-person Wallingford Democratic Town Committee and then a vote of the Wallingford Town Council. We appreciated that the Wallingford Democrats allowed for an open process within their party structure, but please be aware that no public housing residents were members of the Wallingford Democratic Town Committee or the Wallingford Town Council at the time. Our candidate was elected because the Democratic party leaders were sensitive to the voice of the residents. Can we always count on that happening?

In 2010, when Pat Hogan's term as Resident Commissioner expired, we believed that Section 8-41c of the Connecticut General Statutes gave our Tenant Council the right to recommend a candidate for the position and to have that candidate be seriously considered. We publicly presented Pat Hogan to the Town Council as our Tenant Council recommendation for the vacant Resident Commissioner position. Not only was Ms. Hogan not chosen for the position, she was never even vetted. The Republican Town Committee decided in the proverbial smoked filled back room who to recommend for the position, knowing that they controlled a majority of votes on the Town Council and could win the appointment. Residents were completely excluded from the process.

Ladies and gentlemen, despite stereotypes to the contrary, we public housing residents are active seniors, hard working families trying to make ends meet, your fellow church members, volunteers for local charities, your neighbors, and perhaps even your family members. We are proud to be actively engaged citizens, involved in our housing and our town. We want and deserve the right to elect the Resident Commissioner who represents us on our housing authority board of commissioners. The tenant commissioner is only one vote among five on a housing authority board. We are not seeking control, only a genuine voice offering residents' perspectives about where we live.