

Testimony by Timothy Slocum
Raised Bill No. 6606
State Committee on Judiciary
Monday, March 21, 2011
Legislative Office Building

Honorable Committee Members, good morning and thank you for allowing me to address you. My name is Timothy Slocum. I am the Mayor of Cheshire and the Chairman of the Cheshire Town Council, and I am here to speak against Raised Bill No. 6606, "An Act Concerning The Determination Of The Residence Of Incarcerated Persons For Purposes Of Legislative Districting," which would count incarcerated persons as residents of their last town of residence rather than as residents of the Town of the correctional facility in which they are incarcerated.

This legislation would have a devastating impact on Cheshire's state aid and our Town's operating budget. We estimate that if Raised Bill No. 6606 were enacted that Cheshire could realize a 30% drop in our Education Cost Sharing Grant, a loss of approximately \$2.8 million which is the equivalent of 1 mill. Additionally, numerous other state formula grants that use wealth as a key element would be affected, further reducing revenue for Cheshire.

Cheshire is home to the state's second largest prison, consisting of 45 buildings, covering 424 acres and housing about 2,500 prisoners. The state prison has worked hard to be a good neighbor, but housing these facilities in Cheshire provides no significant economic benefit.

The state PILOT payment was designed to compensate municipalities for the significant tax loss associated with the tax exemption of prison facilities. However, in fiscal year 11-12, Cheshire's state PILOT payment will be funded at about 54.5% rather than the full 100% required by statute. This underfunding is \$1.9 million less than the prescribed level. Additionally, our Mashantucket Pequot and Mohegan Fund Grant which was designed to fill some of the void created by the PILOT underfunding has declined from \$3.001 million in fiscal year 08-09 to \$1.651 million in fiscal year 09-10, a loss of \$1.351 million.

Additionally burdensome is the impact on the Town's infrastructure which has created the need for numerous improvements to the feeder roads around the prison at a cost of approximately \$2.0 million over the past five years.

Finally, in 1990 the State Department of Corrections purchased 20% of the capacity in the Cheshire Wastewater Treatment Plant, and over the past 12 months the facility has exceeded these expected levels by 31%. While the State Department of Corrections pays for the full amount of their discharge, this continuous excess flow creates additional wear on our mechanical equipment, crowds out potential development capacity, and runs the risk of pushing us beyond our permitted level which could result in a costly mandated plant expansion imposed upon the Town by the Department of Environmental Protection.

Cheshire officials have worked very hard to be fiscally responsible. We are maintaining a strong fund balance, we have established significant reserve accounts, our debt service obligations are declining, and we have preserved two very high credit ratings. Yet, like other municipalities, even with cuts in services, programs and personnel, we have still been forced to consistently increase the taxes on our businesses and residents.

In the face of these decisions, a reduction in various revenue sources totaling approximately \$2.8 million would be very destructive to the Town's fiscal year 11-12 proposed budget which already will require a tax increase just to maintain services.

Consequently, I urge you to defeat Raised Bill No. 6606 and maintain the current determination of residency for incarcerated persons which would preserve the level of funding upon which Cheshire and most of the other prison towns have come to rely.

Thank you for your consideration of my opinion, and I wish you well in your deliberations during this legislative session.