

Testimony of
Catherine Contessa

Before the Judiciary Committee
Friday, March 25, 2011
11:00 a.m.

H.B. 6620 AN ACT CONCERNING CONDOMINIUMS AND COMMON INTEREST OWNERSHIP COMMUNITIES

My name is Catherine Contessa and I truly wish I could be here in person. I have lived at my condo complex since 1985. I am a long time Board member, as well as the Treasurer.

During my years living at my complex, I have witnessed many, many changes. I have watched our Board grow in knowledge. We are members of CAI-Connecticut.

We have found, by attending the seminars that are sponsored by CAI, we, as a Board, have become more pro-active as opposed to re-active.

Let me tell you about our Board.

We are a working Board. We all take specific assignments, research them, put presentations together to present to the community (either via mail or at annual meetings). We have one specific Board member who is a liaison to the community. If there is an issue, this individual speaks with the unit owner in order to get the issue resolved to everyone's satisfaction. We work very closely with our Property Manager, who is extremely knowledgeable, and guides us through some tough waters. For the most part, we are a highly visible Board. We all walk the community at one time or another. Some of us are out there on a daily basis walking our dogs. All unit owners know that they can approach any one of us at any time.

Our monthly Board meetings have **ALWAYS** had an open section so that the unit owners, if there was an issue, can come and speak with us. Unit owners have always been encouraged to stay and listen to the entire Board meeting.

The feedback we have received from our Community is and I quote, "why come to a meeting, why change the way the Board does anything? The wheel is working extremely well; why break it???"

This brings me to this Ombudsman Bill, Number 6620. You have got to be kidding me????

How many condominium complexes are there in the State of Connecticut? Why make more committees and cost us, the tax payers, more money? I stated to former Attorney General Richard Blumenthal the following:

"Instead of passing a law to attempt to govern individual communities, why not first make it mandatory that each and every complex **MUST** join CAI. If they do not, then the complex would be fined on a sliding scale depending on the size of the complex. Each and every Board member must attend so many seminars annually to keep up with changes and how to run their communities. CAI must submit copies of attendees to the State once annually as proof those Board members have attended educational seminars. If the State is soooooo interested in condos.

Let this run for at least 5 years to get all the "kinks" out. Then see what type of complaints you receive. It is up to the Board to be certain that the unit owners are educated."

I also invited him to attend one of our monthly or annual meetings. To which he responded that he would really like to do that." I attempted to hold him to his word to **no avail**. Unless you totally understand how complexes work and differ, you cannot set up bills to govern them.

I am certain there are numerous members of the Senate and House of Representatives live in condo complexes. Are they looking to govern all of the complexes? Are they on a self-appointed mission to make everyone's life miserable and eliminate condo living completely? If they wish to do that, just put a moratorium on the building of condos?

I believe that most of the complaints you receive are from un-educated or disgruntled unit owners.

Let me give you an example, we currently have a former Board member who resigned from the Board when they realized that they were not going to get items done at their unit that were the unit owners responsibility at the Associations expense. This individual attempted to get elected to the Board last June and did not succeed. They wrote a scathing letter to our Board President, stating that they should have been elected. Ever since then, this former Board member has attended each and every Board meeting. At each meeting, they waste time with non-productive comments.

When you have a unit owner like this in your complex, why should **ALL** of the other unit owners be financially punished?

This Ombudsman Bill would do just that. Is the State of Connecticut looking to own Condominium Complexes statewide?????? With all of the CIOA revisions and a Bill such as proposed, that is exactly what will happen. Do you have enough staff to take care of the daily running of over 3,000 complexes??????

Thank you for your time.

Respectfully,
Catherine Contessa