

TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO

HOUSE BILL 868
HOUSE BILL 5780
HOUSE BILL 6294

and

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF

HOUSE BILL 5480

**TESTIMONY OF ERIC BROWN
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CONNECTICUT COUNCIL OF POLICE UNIONS
AFSCME, COUNCIL 15**

**BEFORE THE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE, OF
THE CONNECTICUT GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

FEBRUARY 18, 2011

Ladies and Gentlemen of the Committees, my name is Eric Brown, and I am an attorney and lobbyist with AFSCME Council 15, a labor union representing the interests of more than 4000 police officers in 62 municipal communities throughout Connecticut.

I am here today to speak in opposition to House Bill 868 – An Act Concerning Employment of Private Detectives by Municipalities.

This bill, as we see it, is designed to privatize police functions which should be done by certified police officers under the direct control of either the municipal police department or the Department of Public Safety.

Employment of private firms and individuals to perform functions which are fundamental governmental functions – like the provision of public safety services – is capable of leading to public corruption. Furthermore, it can lead to higher expenses for municipalities, shoddy and unaccountable service, and harassment of the public at large.

Public safety is a function which must be performed by government under the tight controls maintained by the government to assure the protection and safety of the citizenry.

In this state, we require that all of those individuals who perform police functions be certified by the POST Academy, and satisfy polygraph, psychological, and background checks in order to ensure proper qualifications for dealing with the public and performing the functions of a police officers. This bill would throw all of those

requirements away and expose the public to rogue detectives, all in an effort to save a few dollars. The public safety is worth more than that.

We are opposed to passage of House Bills 5780 AN ACT CONCERNING INTERLOCAL AGREEMENTS and 6294 AN ACT CONCERNING SHARED SERVICES. We oppose these bills because they present unique challenges to the delivery of police services among communities. In particular, in a police department, definition of a command structure is vital to carrying out the mission of public safety. When regionalization and shared services are thrown into the mix, the identification of supervision and leadership becomes problematic and can lead to confusion and disruption in the delivery of services. That can pose a threat to the public and the police officers, particularly in hot situations demanding immediate and direct leadership from supervisors.

Further, implementation of the rights set forth in these bills will require the participating communities to renegotiate collective bargaining agreements with effected bargaining groups, creating uncertainty among employees about the working conditions and benefits afforded to them.

We are in support of HB 5480 - AN ACT ESTABLISHING A MUNICIPAL POSTEMPLOYMENT BENEFIT PLAN DEFICIT FUNDING BONDS PILOT PROGRAM. We believe that this Pilot Program has the potential of eliminating the crushing liabilities which some municipalities face in financing their OPEB obligations to employees, and if successful, can allow municipalities to continue to provide and fund the valuable OPEB benefits which it has historically provided to its valued municipal employees for years of great public service.