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TESTIMONY

OF

**THE HONORABLE MAYOR JASON L. MCCOY, ESQ.,
ON BEHALF OF THE TOWN OF VERNON, CONNECTICUT**

IN SUPPORT OF

S.B. No. 518

**AN ACT AUTHORIZING ELECTRONIC SIGNATURE ON DECLARATIONS OF
PERSONAL PROPERTY**

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Friday, March 4, 2011

Senator Cassano, Representative Gentile, and members of the Planning and Development Committee,

I am honored to appear before you today to submit my testimony in support of S.B. 518: *An Act Authorizing Electronic Signature on the Declarations of Personal Property.*

Currently sections 12-41 and 12-42 of the Connecticut General Statutes, entitled "Filing of declaration," and "Extension for filing declaration. Assessor preparation of declaration when none filed," require that taxpayers file an annual declaration of personal property and sets the filing deadline. As currently written, the statute requires that taxpayers prepare a hard copy or electronic copy of their personal property declarations and file it with the Assessor no later than November 1. The problem with this statute's current mandate, however, is that it does not allow for the electronic filing and electronic signature, forcing taxpayers who file online to still file a hard copy with the Assessor's office.

Allowing for the amendment of the current legislation would allow for the implementation and ease of electronic filing for personal property declarations. Having the option to electronically file would eliminate the unnecessary waste of time, money and duplication of forms that currently burdens both the town and taxpayers. S.B. 518 will create more efficiency in the annual filing process, as well as an increase in timely filings, reducing the number of late penalties placed on late filers and non filers. This bill, as proposed, would create more incentive for taxpayers to file on time and at no additional cost to the municipal government.

I support the amendment of sections 12-41 and 12-42 of the general statutes, to permit businesses to have the option to submit electronic personal property declarations with electronic signature. Having the option of electronically filing as suggested by S.B. 518 will allow businesses and their tax preparers at the municipal level to be able to file the same way they file at the state and federal level. This amendment fosters a more efficient business friendly atmosphere for both the filer and the municipal assessment department savings hundreds to thousands of man hours each year as well as reducing expenses like postage and paper for businesses as well as for the municipality. The bill will permit an overall cost savings for all involved. The State and Federal levels have allowed for this technology to expedite the process of filing, and it is time that municipalities have the option of moving into the 21st century.

Having the option to file online with the inclusion of a signature is a more attractive and practical option that has the potential to save an estimated 150 man hours. Vernon began investigation of an electronic filing program in 2008 when looking at man-hours needed in the assessment department. It was found that nearly 450 hours each year was spent on data entry and corrections to personal property submissions that did not take into account municipal depreciation schedule. When a solution to this costly waste of valuable labor and time was found we ran into this road block in the law that required the declaration be filed in paper and signed in ink.

We were the first municipality in Connecticut to develop in conjunction with a software vendor an electronic filing solution. As of 2009, the number of people utilizing this program has increased. I believe that this law will ease the burden on taxpayers by allowing for more options, and a reduction in the amount of time it takes to file. S.B. 518 will also provide relief for business and within the municipal government.

I would like to thank Senator Guglielmo for his sponsorship of this bill. I would also like to thank Chairmen Cassano, Chairmen Gentile, and members of the Planning and Development Committee for allowing me the opportunity to testify before you today. I strongly urge the consideration of this bill for the taxpayers of Vernon and residents of every city and town in Connecticut.

Sincerely,

By:

Jason L. McCoy, Esq.
Mayor of Vernon-Rockville