

PUBLIC TESTIMONY
Planning & Development Committee
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By:
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Supporting SB: 402 & SB 519:

To require the state to create a municipal web portal to assist municipalities with e-government initiatives

I am in the web development business and have spent the past ten years studying Federal, state and municipal websites.

I drafted the above mentioned Bills and submitted them through Senators Doyle, Fonfara, and Kissel, and Representative Guerrero. Both sides of the aisle have responded with their own Bills.

On January 21, 2009, newly elected President Obama signed one of his first memorandums - the Memorandum for the Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies on Transparency and Open Government. In the directive, President Obama called for an unprecedented level of openness in Government, asking agencies to "ensure the public trust and establish a system of transparency, public participation, and collaboration." The memo further directed the Chief Technology Officer, in coordination with the Directors of OMB and GSA, to take specific actions implementing the principles set forth in the memorandum."

I support this Federal eGovernment initiative, as I believe the Internet is a valuable and very effective resource which should not be squandered. Greater transparency and openness can help overcome public apathy, by encouraging public participation and increasing collaboration.

In CT, the PRI committee recently concluded a 15 man-month study on state eGovernment, but, unfortunately, the scope of this study failed to include municipalities., leaving 169 inexperienced municipalities to their own woefully inadequate devices.

These Bills seek to provide a web portal for our municipalities through which they can engage the public.

I believe that the eGovernment expertise of municipalities is limited and that some level of statewide organization will be required to assist communities in keeping abreast of the technologies.

As I envision it, this act will assist municipalities with the development and coordination of their eGovernment initiatives. It will establish a web portal through which all municipalities will be able to engage the public on a global scale, seamlessly, utilizing a unified content management system. Municipalities will be able to feed the data streams from their local websites into the portal. Visitors will be able to customize their viewing experience, selecting the community or communities and specific content which they wish to engage. It seeks to standardize data formats and interconnect all municipalities, permitting comparative reporting.

Participation by municipalities will be voluntary, not mandated. It is believed that municipalities will choose to participate because of the major advantages offered by operating through a single, portal, in addition their individual web sites.

An opportunity exists to generate significant revenues through advertising appearing the site.. Municipalities stand to benefit financially from promotion appearing on their pages. Costs will be more than offset through advertising-generated revenues. Revenues, exceeding costs, shall be shared with participating municipalities. This should entice participation and a cooperative effort..

Statement of purpose::

This legislation seeks to include municipalities in the state's eGovernment strategy. It will offer municipalities a single unified, interconnected portal through which to engage the public statewide, as well as on a global audience. It will help facilitate the development of data and content standards, and will work to overcome public apathy.

Secondarily, this legislation will dovetail Federal eGovernment strategies to help create a more open, transparent government; to break down barriers between the citizens and their government; to create lasting improvements in the way government makes its decisions, solves problems and addresses its challenges. This legislation will promote greater transparency, participation and collaboration between the governed and their government.

Further recommendations, including an annual eGovernment contest, can be found in a presentation I have prepared entitled Connecticut 2.0.

Since Senate Bills 402 and 519 appear similar, it might make sense to merge them.

Senate Bill 519 might be amended, still an eGovernment Bill, establishing a potentially profitable statewide eCommerce Portal.

SB 519 (amended)

THIS ACT SEEKS TO ESTABLISH A STATE RUN, REVENUE-GENERATING, ECOMMERCE PORTAL OFFERING LOCAL, AND STATE-RESIDENT BUSINESSES' PRODUCTS AND SERVICES TO THE GLOBAL MARKET

An innovative and entrepreneurial pilot program will be planned and implemented, testing the viability of the state and its municipalities for earning revenues through eCommerce activities. An eCommerce web portal site will be developed which will promote resident state businesses, offer their goods for sale, and accept advertising. It will operate similarly to, and partner with existing industry leaders such as Google, Ebay, Amazon, Craigslist, Groupon, Facebook, Twitter, etc. Revenues will be generated from the sale of its partner businesses' goods, services and advertising. Revenues will be shared with participating municipalities in a fashion similar to ECS.

Statement of purpose:

To create a new, ongoing source of revenues outside of taxation, to offset sales taxes not paid on out-of-state Internet sales; to increase revenues to municipalities; to help local businesses reach a global market; to elevate web standards within the state; to establish CT as innovative leader in eGovernment and government eCommerce.