

ENFIELD FIRE DISTRICT No.1

OFFICE OF THE FIRE CHIEF

EDWARD N. RICHARDS
FIRE CHIEF

Public Safety and Security Committee of the
Connecticut Legislature
Ref. Governor's Bill No. 1017

February 22, 2011

Chairman Hartley, Chairman Dargan and Honorable Committee Members:

It is with the utmost concern that I address the Governor's proposed bill to consolidate the Department of Emergency Management and Homeland Security (DEMHS) with the Department of Public Safety (DPS).

When DPS was responsible for the State's homeland security there was a distinct lack of communication, cooperation and collaboration with local emergency response agencies that presented an impediment to effective management and distribution of federal homeland security grant monies for equipment, training and exercises. The fire service in Connecticut worked very hard to extract what is now DEMHS from under DPS control and was successful. This began a new era of the above mentioned communication, cooperation and collaboration that contributed to a greater level of preparedness for local emergency response agencies including the fire service. The keystone of an effective response and mitigation effort in the emergency management and homeland security arena in the State is a strong, unified, well-equipped and highly trained fire service. It is well-known that all major incidents or events start locally and end locally therefore it is imperative that local responders have the equipment and training to be able to mount an effective response.

It is my firm belief (based on prior experience) that the proposed merger of DEMHS and DPS will adversely impact the ability of Connecticut's Fire Service and other local emergency response agencies to respond and cope with a disastrous event. If DEMHS and DPS are merged the State Administrative Agency (SAA) will change. This in effect shuts off Federal Homeland Security grant funding for up to twelve months. Earlier this month, Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano stated "The terrorist threat facing our country has evolved significantly...the threat facing us is at its most heightened state since those attacks" (9/11/2001). I ask you to consider if this is the time to take any action that might adversely impact our ability to respond to and mitigate an incident?

Thank you for your consideration of this input to your deliberation with regard to this issue. Please consider the potential impact of the important decision that has been thrust upon this committee.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Edward N. Richards". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent initial "E".

Edward N. Richards, Fire Chief
Connecticut State Fire & Rescue Disaster Response Plan Coordinator
Past President, Connecticut Fire Chiefs Association
Past President, Connecticut Career Fire Chiefs Association