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**CITY OF STAMFORD  
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR**

**Testimony of Mayor Michael A. Pavia – Appropriations Committee Special Forum for  
Municipal Officials – March 7, 2012**

Senator Harp, Representative Walker and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee my name is Michael Pavia and I am the Mayor of the City of Stamford. I am here today as part of a group of mayors, to respectfully urge your support for meaningful mandate reform.

I will speak to several specific reform requests but the CT Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations reports that there are currently over 1200 state mandates on cities and towns. Imagine how difficult it is for a municipality to implement let alone fund even a fraction of this number.

I am including in my written testimony a more comprehensive list of reforms that municipalities like Stamford are seeking.

- Mandate relief is a critical part of **resolving the property tax crisis**
- Mandate relief **doesn't have to cost the State any revenue**
- As members of the Appropriations Committee you have special statutory obligation to analyze and act on unfunded mandates.

1. One reform which appears at almost every session is to enact a Constitutional amendment or **statutory prohibition on the passage of unfunded or underfunded state mandates without a 2/3 vote of both chambers of the General Assembly.**

Our own federal government enacted in 1995 such a statutory prohibition on unfunded Federal mandates.

2. Another reform would be:

**Modify the requirements for posting legal notices** to allow municipalities to publish notice of the availability of a particular document on line, instead of having to print publish the entire document.

The benefits would include:

i) Lower the cost of print advertising **Cost estimates range from \$4,500/year in a small suburb to \$130,000/year in a city such as Stamford.**

ii) More sustainable - less paper and ink.

iii) More accessible as the revised publication would direct readers to the municipality's website for the full text of any required publication.

3. Amend CGS 7-148v to **increase the threshold for requiring competitive bidding**, from \$7,500 to \$15,000.

- As the cost of service contracts and small purchases continue to rise there has not been the corresponding increase on this threshold.

4. Lastly, but something very familiar to me this year is to **Allow municipalities to defer revaluations** to:

- (a) provide savings from the cost of conducting them
- (b) provide relief from extreme shifts on valuation that often follow swings in the economy.

As Mayor of Stamford I am very fortunate to have a very diverse property base. That has not spared Stamford from:

- Property values which have fallen to levels not witnessed in five years with billions of dollars in equity having been erased.
- Vacancy rates in Stamford's CBD increased to 26%,
- Consensus that shift in property values would shift significantly from commercial to residential

While Stamford's situation may be different from other municipalities, what mayors have in common is we have the best grasp of the property market and the impact that revaluations have across all sectors. We know that we must continue to balance our budgets, provide service levels that our residents expect and continue to attract businesses with an equitable property tax base.

Property taxes are the key revenue base for municipalities. Allowing us flexibility in setting the tax base of each of our cities is a critical tool.

Over the past few years **the General Assembly has rejected numerous proposed new mandates** that would have collectively imposed huge costs on property taxpayers and for that we are very appreciative.

We know that each of you go home to your own cities and towns and appreciate the burdens that these mandates can impose. We appreciate your ongoing support that no new unfunded state mandates pass through this committee.