

Connecticut State Grange

TESTIMONY OF THE CONNECTICUT STATE GRANGE IN OPPOSITION TO RAISED BILL 84, AN ACT CONCERNING OUTDOOR WOOD FURNACES

FEBRUARY 22, 2012

I am Gordon Gibson of Vernon, Legislative Liaison for the Connecticut State Grange. I am speaking today in opposition to Raised Bill 84 which would prohibit the use of outdoor wood burning furnaces from May 1 through September 30 each year.

The Grange believes that, when installed and used properly, outdoor wood burning furnaces are an excellent source of heat that uses a renewable source of fuel and reduces our dependence on foreign oil. Our climate is such that in more years than not we have frost in both May and September. Connecticut's weather is fickle enough that I have personally experienced years in which a source of heat was necessary in every month of the year in the Connecticut River valley. The situation is more severe in the higher elevations of Connecticut, particularly in the northwestern hills. Some people use outdoor wood furnaces not only to heat their homes but also to provide domestic hot water. If people are not allowed to use their wood burning furnaces in the summer months they will have to incur the cost of a secondary system for their hot water. How many of them will install and use an indoor wood furnace, a fireplace or a wood burning stove? What will this accomplish in terms of reducing air pollution, the major objection to wood burning furnaces?

The Grange believes the existing laws concerning the installation and use of wood burning furnaces are appropriate and adequate. However, unlike oil or gas fired furnaces, where the homeowner can set the thermostat and forget about the furnace, a wood burning furnace requires frequent attention and adjustment to the draft and damper controls to safely obtain the most heat with the least pollution. Several towns have passed local ordinances and other are considering ordinances that prohibit the use of wood burning furnaces primarily because of the air pollution they create, even when installed and used in compliance with existing laws and regulations. Arbitrarily banning the use of all outdoor wood burning furnaces during the summer months because some people are not operating them properly is not the proper solution to the problem. What is needed is education to teach people how to properly manage and operate these furnaces. The Grange recommends that the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection and/or the University of Connecticut Cooperative Extension Service develop and offer courses to instruct people in the proper installation, care and use of wood burning furnaces. We do not believe any additional legislation is necessary to authorize these courses.

Thank you for your consideration of my testimony.

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