

March 16, 2012

Co-Chair Edward Meyer  
Co-Chair Richard Roy  
Senator Andrew Roraback  
Representative Clark Chapin

Environment Committee:

My name is Cathy Barber, legislative Chair of the CT New England Convenience Store Association. We represent over 1300 convenience stores in New England. Also, I represent Drake Petroleum, supplier of many local family owned gasoline stations. Together we employ CT residents in nearly every town.

I am here to oppose S.B. 375, AN ACT CONCERNING REIMBURSEMENT UNDER THE UNDERGROUND STORAGE TANK PETROLEUM CLEAN-UP PROGRAM .

Family owned businesses and their customers have overcome oil embargos, odd even days, government price controls, gas lines, recessions, price spikes caused by wars and hurricanes, extended power outages that forced hundreds of gas stations to close, and Wall Street greed that led to speculators driving the price of oil well beyond what the laws of supply and demand would dictate.

The good news for motorists and our economy is that these family businesses survived! They overcame circumstances well beyond their control, opened their business up 7 days a week and served their customers. And after all that - the one issue that many of them will not overcome is SB 375, introduced by the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP).

The hundreds of gasoline station operators who rely on the Tank Program to comply with federal law will likely not survive if EPA withdraws its recognition. And frankly how can EPA not withdraw, considering that the state owes CT tank owners 100 million dollars?

Many of these local businesses have been passed down over the generations from father to son and now to their grandchildren. These businesses are not multi-million dollar operations that result in early retirements or big pensions. They're small businesses run by ordinary people; you sit next to them in church, see them at little league games or the supermarket. If SB 375 passes, the life work of these businesses is in jeopardy to say the least.

In the late in 1980's when these families could no longer get private insurance to comply with federal law, they turned to the state for help. In the best interests of the environment, businesses and the citizens of our state, the legislature

instituted a tax to pay for a public insurance program that would allow gas station to continue to operate.

That plan has always accomplished its basic purpose – to provide insurance coverage so that gas stations could remain open. And now, the Tank Program is in danger of losing EPA's recognition resulting in damage to every person who buys gas in CT.

These families have done nothing wrong. They pay their taxes, comply with environmental laws, and their future is in your hands.

If Connecticut cannot find the funds owed to tank owners and find a way sustain this program into the future, I'm afraid that innocent, hard working families will be forced close, not just a few of them, but hundreds.

Please oppose S.B. 375, AN ACT CONCERNING REIMBURSEMENT UNDER THE UNDERGROUND STORAGE TANK PETROLEUM CLEAN-UP PROGRAM.

Thank you for your consideration and I would welcome any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Cathy Barber  
Connecticut Legislative Chair,  
New England Convenience Store Association &  
Drake Petroleum, North Grosvenordale, CT