

Written Testimony of
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Committee on Government Administration and Elections
Senate Bill No. 426
An Act Concerning Geographic Information Systems Data Sharing
March 21, 2012
1:30pm

Co-Chair Slossberg, Co-Chair Morin, Vice Chair Meyer, Vice Chair Lesser, Ranking Member McLachlan, Ranking Member Hwang and Members of the committee my name is Scott Roberts, Director of Technology of the Town of South Windsor and Vice President of the Connecticut Chapter of GMIS representing other Towns and Board of Education information technology professionals. I have been providing GIS and information technology services for over 18 years here in Connecticut. Today I'm honored to provide testimony on behalf of my town, but also on behalf of the other agencies represented within GMIS. I wish to voice my support of Senate Bill 426 outlining the sharing GIS data between the electric or electric distribution companies and local government agencies.

The passage of this bill can revolutionize the cooperation and coordination between town officials and electric companies during the next major natural disaster to affect Connecticut. Today, the majority of what we do is location based. We carry smart phones with data collection apps or we use GPS devices to get us from place to place. So why do we not have access to information (GIS data) that can help us report the location of damage or understand why power outage is affecting a specific area? The technology exists and is in place in many towns across Connecticut. The time is now. During the October storm many towns had access to their GIS data showing the locations of damage but had no way of sharing and facilitating the correlation of this data to the power companies systems. We need to develop a process and method of denoting the location of the damage. If we can do this, then those towns with the ability can submit damage reports directly to the electric companies. This will free up electric companies resources to collect information in other communities which should result in a short power outage. This information can also be shared directly with the State Emergency Operation Center and mapped on the State's GIS to share with all state resources, which in turn can be shared with the public.

In addition, we need to have timely reports of streets affected by the outage, locations of damaged equipment and what power service areas are included in the outage. If we can see the damage then we can coordinate response effects within our towns and bordering towns. Many residents remained without power for over a week while damage went un-cleared in a neighboring town. I was personally affected by this and had no idea why. When I contacted my home town officials they had limited information which left me

very frustrated. We need to see power service areas and not as an electrical engineers perspective but to know that a substation in Ellington feeds the northeast section of South Windsor. This information will allow town officials to share information with the public and coordinate resources with their surrounding towns and electric companies.

Finally this information will aid our public safety officials in daily routine manners such as reporting street light outages or the location of a motor vehicle accident affecting power lines and poles. Currently, not all of the poles are visually numbered. There have been incidents when we have provided numbers and cross streets and electric companies still had difficulty locating the street light outage. If we can use our GIS mapping and provide a GPS point on a map highlighting the location of the outage or accident, it should dramatically improve service. As we understand it, the electric company's current process is to send a supervisor to the location to verify the affected assets (poles, wires, etc...), then he/she submits a work order ticket to dispatch a repair crew. This process seems time consuming and is a major inconvenience to the public and consumes town resources longer than what seems necessary. If we can use the GIS information and develop a better location identification and notification process we can better serve the public while reducing the demands on the electric company in the process.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to submit testimony today on Senate Bill No. 426 and I would be happy to answer any questions the committee may have.

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