



TOWN OF LITCHFIELD

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Good Morning:

My name is Leo Paul. I am First Selectman of Litchfield.

I strongly support SB 272. However, I urge the Committee to support meaningful relief from existing mandates THIS YEAR.

SB 272 would enact a statutory prohibition to against the passage of *new* unfunded state mandates without a 2/3 vote of both chambers of the General Assembly.

Local government supports the objective of many mandates -- but oppose the State's failure to pay for them.

At a time when towns and cities are struggling to continue to provide needed services to residents and businesses, immediate -- not only future -- mandates relief should be a priority.

Municipal officials recognize that the General Assembly has a growing reluctance to impose or expand unfunded mandates. In particular, I appreciate this committee's sensitivity to the issue.

However, modest proposals to update prevailing wage thresholds, which have not been raised in 20 years, and to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the municipal binding arbitration mandate continue to be blocked due to special interest pressure.

Considering that municipalities are in a deep fiscal crisis not seen in generations, towns and cities need mandates relief THIS YEAR.

Support Mandates Relief THIS YEAR

To provide meaningful mandates reform during the most challenging fiscal crisis since the Great Depression, I urge the Committee to be bold and support the following reforms:

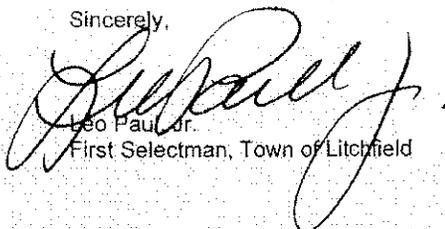
Amend the State's prevailing wage rate mandate [CGS 31-53(g)]: (a) adjust the thresholds for renovation construction projects, from \$100,000 to \$400,000; (b) adjust the thresholds for new construction projects, from \$400,000 to \$1 million. The current thresholds have not been raised since 1991.

Modestly modify state-mandated compulsory binding arbitration laws under the Municipal Employee Relations Act (MERA) and the Teacher Negotiation Act (TNA) by (a) requiring that all neutral municipal arbitrators be members of the American Arbitration Association, and (b) preventing an arbitration panel from considering a municipal reserve fund balance when determining municipalities' financial capability.

Eliminate the Minimum Budget Requirement (MBR) that prevents municipalities from finding savings and efficiencies in board of education budgets. At the very least, the MBR should be eliminated for FYs 14-15 to allow municipalities to find reasonable savings for their property taxpayers, or at the very least provide for reductions if certain cost savings or efficiencies can be achieved.

Meaningful mandate relief is long overdue. Enact mandate reform this year! Thank you.

Sincerely,



Leo Paul, Jr.
First Selectman, Town of Litchfield

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