

Re.: "Yes" to HB6537

Dear Co-Chairs Senator Meyer and Rep. Linda Gentile and Environment Committee Members:

As a Mansfield resident and who lobbied legislators to raise SB1094 or its newer version, I support passage of this bill; but I ask you to simplify the bill by stripping it of everything except the new definition of 25-32a. The other parts are more complicated and can be dealt with in separate legislation.

As the summary of the bill states, this bill requires "The University of Connecticut at Storrs to comply with certain water supply plans, consumer information and mapping requirements that are currently applicable to water companies and to classify certain lands of The University of Connecticut at Storrs for purposes of public health regulations."

Mansfield taxpayers have been waiting for this to happen since 2000, when AG Blumenthal created a massive legal and regulatory problem by ordering relevant agencies to stop enforcing 25-32a regulations at University of Connecticut (UConn-Storrs); as you might remember that, although the bills SB 1094 and SB 1208 got a favorable report from the Committee on Environment and was fervently supported by Mansfield, and major environmental groups such as Rivers Alliance of Connecticut and Connecticut Fund for the Environment (CFE), they were shelved by the Committee on Higher Education and Employment Advancement.

The defeat of these bills has given UConn-Storrs the freedom to develop our publicly-owned watershed property without standard checks and balances processes, and to cook future population numbers to hide a self-made water adequacy crisis (see attached) in ways that do not comport with its status as an instrumentality of the state, that controls publicly-owned infrastructures to fulfill the guidelines and goals of the State Plan of Conservation and Development. For over ten years, the disempowered DPH and DEEP and stakeholder municipalities have been forced to step aside as UConn builds out beyond its water supply without fear of regulation or even accountability—and that has created today's water crisis in Storrs.

According to the Office of Legal Research analysis, UConn is not authorized by law to conduct "water system planning," nor are relevant state agencies (DPH & DEEP, municipalities, etc.) empowered to regulate UConn in this area—even as UConn conducts "water system planning" as it tries to find water to supply new urban development in Storrs. This is serious legal problem, and I support the passage of HB6537 because (if stripped of all language except that contained in 25-32a statute) it will solve it.

Today, with its plans to draw water from far outside its watershed, UConn unaccountably and unilaterally shifts the gallons-per-day projections of water

demands in midst of its own EIE process. I fear the state is heading straight into another Fenton-River dry-up –type disaster.

Moreover, as the years have gone by, UConn-Storrs has not fulfilled its two public promises to move its terribly-sited hazmat facility from directly above the publicly-owned stratified drift aquifer Fenton River wellfields, and river which supplies raw surface water for the Windham Water Works.

I have attached a short history I shared with the CEQ of how UConn-Storrs has mismanaged the publicly-owned water system in Storrs, so you know that UConn-Storrs has not in this crucial area fulfilled its responsibilities and obligations as an instrumentality of the state. Passage of HB6537 will ensure that UConn-Storrs fulfill these responsibilities and obligations.

Best regards,
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c. Attachment: Letter to CEQ dated Jan. 29, 2013