

Written Testimony of Roberta Paro, Sierra Club member and resident of Norwich, CT
Testimony before the Connecticut General Assembly Energy and Technology
Committee
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Written Testimony concerning Governor's Bill 6360 AN ACT CONCERNING
IMPLEMENTATION OF CONNECTICUT'S COMPREHENSIVE ENERGY STRATEGY.

I am at this hearing because I care about the type of world we create for myself, my friends, my family, my community, my state, and for future generations.

Energy is a strategic issue. It is about jobs. In a state where the unemployment rate is almost 9 percent I think it is important to know that research from the Political and Economy Research Institute at the University of Massachusetts shows that every \$1 million dollars invested in the fossil fuel sector creates five jobs, while the same \$1 million dollars invested in clean energy creates seventeen jobs. (Pollin, Robert, *Back to Full Employment*, Cambridge, MA, MIT Press, 2012). Energy is also about our health, climate disruption, clean air and water, and protecting wildlife and wild places from mountain tops being blown off or from drilling for extreme oil and gas.

Connecticut should keep Canadian hydropower and trash incineration out of our class I renewable standard. Canadian hydropower will not create jobs here in Connecticut. The development of large scale hydropower has not always been done with respect for the human and treaty rights of the First Nations peoples living near the large scale dams in Quebec. And, large scale hydropower destroys lots of soil and habitat.

Over-reliance on trash to energy plants slows down our state's necessary move towards becoming a zero waste community. The City of San Francisco, and the island of Nantucket are both on their way toward becoming zero waste communities. I point this out because they are examples of what is possible with good policy and commitment. We do not need to settle for the current status of recycling in Connecticut and we do not need to move trash incineration from class III to class I renewable status.

Instead of changing our class I renewables, Connecticut should make a long-term commitment to produce electricity by using clean, renewable energy and do so by removing barriers to solar installation and by signing long term contracts for class I renewable energy produced in New England. One example would be to do as Germany has done and do away with the permits needed for solar installations.

Energy efficiency programs are the cleanest and cheapest way to meet Connecticut's energy needs. Energy efficiency programs save Connecticut residents and businesses money, create jobs, cut air pollution, and reduce our carbon footprint. For the greater good let's make sure everybody has access to these programs by sustainably funding heating oil efficiency programs for heating oil customers.

The proposed initiative to expand the use of natural gas to heat our homes and businesses must be considered in the context of what it means to live sustainably on this planet. Natural gas is a non-renewable resource. For that reason alone we must try to use as little of it as possible.

Hydro-fracking, a method being used to extract natural gas from shale rock, is not regulated by the Clean Air, Water and Drinking Water Acts. Unconventional hydro-fracking shoots millions of gallons of chemical-laced water deep into the earth where it can potentially contaminate drinking water. When substances produced by society, such as the chemicals used in hydro-fracking, are produced and used at a faster rate than they can be broken down and integrated into the cycles of nature we risk reaching unknown limits beyond which irreversible changes can occur. We should do at least two things to lessen our impact on the environment:

1. Ensure that people and businesses using the following types of heating sources are given the same \$500 tax credit that is being offered when converting to natural gas: geothermal, solar thermal heating panels, energy star rated ductless heat pumps, and energy star rated heat pumps along with having their duct systems tested and sealed whenever heat loss is measured at more than 13 percent;
2. Require efficiency measures be put in place for any buildings converting to natural gas and using the \$500 tax credit. (Remember, there is approximately a 3:1 jobs creation ratio for investing in energy efficiency and clean energy vs. fossil fuels).

Finally, as a resident of Norwich, I get my electricity through Norwich Public Utilities, which along with most of the other municipal utilities are members of the Connecticut Municipal Electric Energy Cooperative. Residents of Norwich would like to be part of creating a sustainable, clean energy economy in Connecticut. I would ask that you check to see if current energy efficiency programs being offered by CMEEC members have better or comparable results to those that CL&P and United Illuminating customers participate in. Also, with the decrease in cost of solar over the past four years, CMEEC member utilities should either have to create programs that will allow residential customers to buy or install solar panels, or participate in the programs that other Connecticut residents are eligible for.

"It really boils down to this: that all life is interrelated ... Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly." - Martin Luther King, Jr. Civil rights activist and author

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