



**HOUSATONIC VALLEY
COUNCIL OF ELECTED OFFICIALS**

OLD BROOKFIELD TOWN HALL
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To Members of the Planning
and Development Committee:

February 1, 2013

My name is Matthew Knickerbocker. I am the First Selectman of the Town of Bethel and also Chairman of the Housatonic Valley Council of Elected Officials which serves the Greater Danbury Area.

As you have undoubtedly heard from many others, new unfunded state mandates are becoming a significant burden to local municipalities as they attempt to maintain services in an era of stagnant or shrinking tax revenues. The relentless creation of more and more programs year after year causes a shift in the tax burden of what the state, rather than local communities, decides are meritorious municipal service expansions.

New mandates that are passed without funding can only be paid for in one of two ways: The town must either raise taxes to cover the new cost, or eliminate one or more services its constituents have come to rely upon. Despite the fact that many unfunded mandates address worthy goals and are designed to improve lives, approving them without proper funding effectively removes the right of local communities to make those decisions for themselves.

For Connecticut to realize the vision of growth and renewal that has been articulated by Governor Malloy as well as this legislature, it is imperative that our towns and cities work cooperatively with our state government. Simply passing the cost of government down to the towns to deal with it is unacceptable. We respectfully ask that you consider the cost implications of all new legislation on local towns at least as carefully as you study the impact on the state budget.

For these reasons, the Housatonic Valley Council of Elected Officials strongly supports the effort to curtail unfunded mandates, and we ask that you consider the following recommendations:

RECOMMENDATION #1: *Reduce the burden of the prevailing wage mandate by increasing the threshold to one million dollars for new construction and \$400,000 for renovations, as well as indexing the thresholds to the annual rate of inflation.*

RECOMMENDATION #2: *Require any new unfunded mandates be approved by a 2/3 majority of legislators.*

RECOMMENDATION #3: *Allow municipalities to post legal notices on their websites.*

RECOMMENDATION #4: *Eliminate the requirement that towns store the property of evicted tenants.*

RECOMMENDATION #5: *Reduce municipal unemployment compensation taxes by establishing a minimum threshold of at least 600 hours before a part-time, seasonal or temporary municipal employee is eligible for unemployment compensation benefits.*

Thank you for this opportunity to comment and for your concern with mandate relief. I wish you a successful session.

Sincerely yours,



Matthew Knickerbocker
First Selectman of Bethel, CT
and Chairman of the HVCEO

cc: Area Legislative Delegation