

Testimony of John Elsesser, Town Manager, Town of Coventry
Planning and Development Committee
March 11, 2013

**SUPPORT - SB-847 - AN ACT CONCERNING THE COMMISSION FOR
TECHNOLOGY ADVANCEMENT**

I am writing in support of SB-847 and appreciate the Governor and your committee for considering this transformational bill. While at face value it may seem to only seat several municipal representatives at the table of a committee, it is actually allowing Towns a path to a new way conducting business by opening up the Broadband Nutmeg network to municipal use at reasonable prices.

Towns have always controlled by infrastructure. Connecticut towns were originally Congregational parishes. Each parish was set up to overcome physical barriers. Coventry had three parishes until they built bridges to allow a way across rivers during the winter months. Bridge infrastructure allowed the church parishes to merge into towns. Two Coventry parishes became the Town of Coventry and one joined with parts of Hebron to become the Town of Andover. The Nutmeg Network is this generation's bridge which will allow new relationships between Towns to gain efficiencies and reduce duplication of services.

Image a future where all Land records are available through one system linked to one assessing database and GIS mapping system. The Nutmeg Network is the infrastructure which could allow that to happen today. Shared financial systems with one chart of accounts to allow benchmarking would now be possible. Centralized Voice over Internet Protocol (VOIP), security and alarm systems, Heating Ventilation controls, radios over the internet and the list goes on limited only by our imagination. The Nutmeg Network is our new bridge to which will transform how Town's work together in a more cost efficient manner.

So we are asking to be allowed a voice in our future by being allowed to participate in the Commission for Technology Advancement. We need to also assure that the rates to use the network do not become tolls which prevent innovation. We suggest that change is difficult enough without financial barriers becoming the cold waters of the rivers of the past. Working together we may be able to find ways to fund the Nutmeg Network outside of State tax dollars. Examples could include looking toward something like the 911 system telephone surcharge or allowing Towns to get fees for the use of their rights of ways by utilities as other States do. Today the state could simply redefine uses of existing grants such as LOCIP and STEAP and the Regional Performance Incentive grant to make use of the Nutmeg Network a top priority in ranking and rating grants.

We appreciate that the State is considering allowing Towns the opportunity to work together toward a more efficient future and urge your support of SB 847.