PUBLIC TESTIMONY
Planning & Development Committee
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Supporting SB 128:
To require the state to create a municipal web portal to assist municipalities with e-government initiatives

I am in the web development business and have spent the past twelve years studying thousands of Federal, state and municipal websites. My background is in consumer product development, and marketing, strategic planning and new business development.

Senator Paul Doyle and Representative Tony Guerrera have been kind enough to submit this bill for your consideration, each of the past two years. Hopefully, this year, it will make its way onto the floor for consideration, debate, and finally, passage.

While simple on the surface, this bill could well lead to Connecticut achieving a position of leadership among state eGovernment initiatives, as Connecticut would, I believe, be the first and only state to put forth such a public/consumer-oriented municipal portal. Not only would this site serve a great need in bringing our state municipalities together on the Internet, thereby facilitating greater communication, but it could well serve as a foundation for future Internet driven programs which could not only enhance our technical position, but in addition, help generate hundreds of millions of dollars in revenues to fill both state and municipal coffers.

On January 21, 2009, newly elected President Obama signed one of his first memorandums - the Memorandum for the Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies on Transparency and Open Government. In the directive, President Obama called for an unprecedented level of openness in Government, asking agencies to "ensure the public trust and establish a system of transparency, public participation, and collaboration." The memo further directed the Chief Technology Officer, in coordination with the Directors of OMB and GSA, to take specific actions implementing the principles set forth in the memorandum."

I support this Federal eGovernment initiative, as I believe the Internet is a valuable and potently effective resource which should not be squandered. Greater transparency and openness can help overcome public apathy, by encouraging public participation and increasing collaboration.

These Bills seek to provide a web portal for Connecticut municipalities through which they can engage the public.

I believe that the eGovernment expertise of municipalities is limited and that some level of statewide organization will be required to assist communities in keeping abreast of the technologies.

As I envision it, this act will assist municipalities with the development and coordination of their eGovemment initiatives. It will establish a web portal through which all municipalities will be able to engage the public on a global scale, seamlessly, utilizing a unified content management system. Municipalities will be able to feed the data streams from their local websites into the portal. Visitors will be able to customize their viewing experience, selecting the community or communities and specific content which they wish to engage. It seeks to standardize data formats and interconnect all municipalities, permitting comparative reporting.

Participation by municipalities will be voluntary, not mandated. It is believed that municipalities will choose to participate because of the major advantages offered by operating through a single, portal, in addition their individual web sites.

An opportunity also exists to generate significant revenues through advertising appearing the site. Municipalities stand to benefit financially from promotion appearing on their pages. Costs will be more than offset through advertising-generated revenues. Any revenues, shall be shared with participating municipalities. This should entice participation and a cooperative effort.

Statement of purpose:
This legislation seeks to include municipalities in the state's eGovernment strategy. It will offer municipalities a single unified, interconnected portal through which to engage the public statewide, as well as on a global audience. It will help facilitate the development of data and content standards, and will work to overcome public apathy.

Secondarily, this legislation will dovetail Federal eGovernment strategies to help create a more open, transparent government; to break down barriers between the citizens and their government; to create lasting improvements in the way government makes its decisions, solves problems and addresses its challenges. This legislation will promote greater transparency, participation and collaboration between the governed and their government.