

Testimony of Regina O'Brien/Redding Planning Commission Member, Town of Redding,
CT Before the Environment Committee

Regarding

S.B. 237 AN ACT PROHIBITING THE STORAGE OR DISPOSAL OF FRACKING WASTE
IN CONNECTICUT

H.B. 5308 AN ACT CONCERNING THE REGULATION OF FRACKING WASTE
H.B. 5307 AN ACT CONCERNING THE USE OF BOOMS FOR THE RETENTION OF
CERTAIN

OILS OR PETROLEUM AND REVISING CERTAIN REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
REGISTRATION OF RADIOACTIVE MATERIALS

Submitted by

Regina O'Brien, Redding Planning Commission

February 28, 2013

Senator Meyer, Representative Gentile, and members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on Senate Bill 237, House Bill 5308, and House Bill 5307. All three bills have important implications for our ability to protect Long Island Sound and our groundwater from toxic chemicals and petroleum products. I support SB 237 and HB 5308, which would prevent Connecticut from becoming a disposal site for unregulated hydrofracking waste. I oppose HB 5307, which would expose our harbors to preventable oil and gas spills.

On behalf of the Town of Redding Planning Commission, I am writing to state we support the bills that would help safeguard the land and water we live on and rely on. The residents of Redding depend on wells for their water. In addition, Redding sits on an aquifer system that is key to the water supply of towns along the coast; we have a genuine understanding that towns throughout the state are related to one another through the land and have a responsibility to safeguard these ecosystems for the benefit of all.

We are concerned that fracking waste is not regulated as hazardous waste, and that there is much that is still unknown about its toxicity and negative impact on people and the land.

Further, we oppose any weakening of best management practices currently in place pertaining to oil transfers in Long Island Sound; the common sense floatable booms are a basic necessity for safeguarding both our environment and livelihood should a spill occur.

SB 237, AA Prohibiting the Storage or Disposal of Fracking Waste in Connecticut, is strong and common-sense measure that will protect our surface and groundwater from contamination by toxic hydrofracking fluid. While Connecticut's geology isn't suited to this method of extracting gas from the ground, it is used in neighboring states like New York

and Pennsylvania. The exact make-up of fracking fluid is unknown because gas companies can claim it as a trade secret, but we do know that used fluid contains not only the original chemicals, but also heavy concentrations of salts, traces of petrochemicals, and toxins that it carries up from deep in the bedrock. Fracking fluid can be five times saltier than sea water, and can contain any of over two dozen known carcinogens and volatile organic compounds. Because of this, fracking companies have a difficult time disposing of this fluid when they are done with it, and have explored shipping to other states for storage, processing it in wastewater treatment plants, and even using it as de-icer on roads. We shouldn't allow our state to be a guinea pig for disposal schemes such as these. Keeping fracking waste out of Connecticut is the only way to protect our drinking water and Long Island Sound.

HB 5308, AAC the Regulation of Fracking Waste, would classify toxic fracking fluid as hazardous waste, closing a loophole in federal law that has allowed it to remain unregulated here in

Connecticut. Enacting this protection is a positive first step, but it alone is not sufficient to fully protect our residents and waterbodies. I urge you to pass this bill along with the companion bill SB 237 to ensure our state does not become the Northeast's designated dumping-ground for toxic fracking waste.

Protecting Long Island Sound from petrochemicals from the shipping industry is also a concern. Currently, ships loading or offloading oils and other petroleum products must put floatable booms around the transfer area to contain any spills. HB 5307, AAC the Use of Booms for the Retention of Certain Oils, would eliminate this requirement, putting natural resources at unnecessary risk. Though spills are infrequent, a major spill in any of our busy ports would be catastrophic to our economy and our environment. The pre-booming requirement is a common sense best management practice that pays immeasurable dividends by keeping our ports open for business and our Sound's waters and wildlife protected.

Please support SB 237's ban on fracking waste and HB 5308's closing of the hazardous waste loophole, and please oppose HB 5307's weakening of protection against oil spills. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

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