

To Energy Committee:

Regarding the 'notice' section of House Bill 5408 we very urgently recommend that Utilities (UI) be required to obtain written consent from property owners for removal of trees on private property.

Before spring of 2013 UI was required to notify a property owner by letter if UI wanted to cut down a tree on private property. If the property owner did not reply within ten days the answer was NO. The property owner did not give consent. And UI could not cut down the tree.

Now if UI wants to cut down a tree on private property UI notifies the property owner by ringing the door bell or leaving a door hanger. If the property owner does not respond within ten days the answer is Yes. NO reply means the property owner has given "consent". And UI can cut down the tree at will on our property. This new definition of "consent" makes no allowance for a property owner in the hospital, on vacation, away on business, out of the country, etc. So we could return home to find our tree or trees cut down, without ever having the opportunity to give "consent". This is a violation of our rights as property owners. UI and its contractors must be required to notify us of their intent to cut down any tree on our property by mail. When there is no response to that letter then we as property owners do NOT give consent.

We urgently recommend that Utilities be required to obtain written consent from property owners for removal of trees on private property. This requirement must be written into the notice section of House Bill 5408 (tree trimming). The language must be revised to provide property owners the appropriate opportunity to make our interests known so we will not be ignored by UI and its contractors which is too easy with the current process as it has been written.

We urge you to represent our interests, as voters and property owners, as well as the interests of the utility companies.

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