



Real Possibilities

**Testimony of Byron Peterson
Senate Bill 2, AAC Electric Customer Consumer Protection
2-20-14**

My name is Byron Peterson and I am a volunteer leader with AARP CT.

On behalf of the 603,000 members of AARP in our state, I want to thank Senator Williams and Senator Looney for their efforts on consumer protections found in Senate Bill 2 and in support of older Connecticut residents. I also want to thank the Energy and Technology committee for holding today's public hearing on Senate Bill 2.

In the last legislative session AARP volunteers and members were instrumental in defeating legislation that would have eliminated the standard offer electric plan that would have weakened consumer protections for all ratepayers. The defeated energy auction plan helped bring to light some of the problem Senate Bill 2 attempts to address.

This bill is a beginning step in the right direction but AARP CT asks that you include additional language that will provide the highest level of consumer protections, marketplace transparency and asset protection for all residents, but especially those ages 50 and up. I want to share with you a story that illustrates the need for consumer friendly legislation in the electric retail supply market.

I believe I am a savvy consumer. I look for good deals and know a scam when I see one. As a 30 year customer of UI, I saw a chance to save some money and switched to a retail supplier. For a few months I saw savings and was quite pleased. However, I lost that entire savings and more because, as it turned out, I had signed up for a variable rate that, after a very short introductory period, increased significantly. The variable rate was 35% higher than the standard offer. I learned a lesson about shopping in the retail market that left a bad taste in my mouth.

AARP hears from its members regularly about stories just like mine, and often significantly worse than mine. We have stories from our members about aggressive sales techniques, inaccurate portrayal of the standard offer, misleading advertising, cancellation fees, variable rates with no caps and inadequate customer service, so that we can give voice to our members and seniors across Connecticut.

We look forward to working with the legislature to pass a strong consumer protections bill so that we don't just band-aid problems with third party electric supplies. We look forward to working collaboratively with all of you to solve them permanently.