

Colleen Ann Reidy  
1116 Enfield Street  
Enfield, CT 06082  
[grampysgurl@aol.com](mailto:grampysgurl@aol.com)

re: HB-5541

March 21, 2014

Legislator:

For twenty plus years I have been an owner occupied taxpaying resident living within the Thompsonville Fire District. I am a consistent voter, married, the mother of three boys, town employee who is the Vice President of the Local for my Union. I have served the town of Enfield on multiple committees for over fourteen years, currently as an Alternate Commissioner on the Enfield Historic District Commission. I am a full participant in the process of improving my community.

Approximately ten years ago we began the arduous process of looking for a larger home for our family of five. At that time we made the decision to stay within Thompsonville, near the village downtown area. There was a time that Thompsonville was a vibrant, well maintained area of working class people; most employed by the world famous Bigelow Carpet Mills. Almost immediately upon the mills closing the downtown area of Thompsonville fell into disrepair and has deteriorated to what are currently quite poor living conditions.

My family remained in Thompsonville because we thought it was important to be an active participant in helping to revitalize a depressed village. For a community to prosper there is a need for permanent residents. With only about 20% home owner occupancy in the downtown area it had been impossible to improve the conditions of this area of town. The same area of town there is a proposed State involved transit center in the works. The restrictions to the vote will do nothing to encourage home occupant ownership. In the end a restriction will discourage families from moving to the village as this restriction isn't enforced anywhere else in town. An educated voter would never choose a substandard vote; which a restricted vote is in reality.

The 3% provision mentioned in section 2b of HB-5541 hurts the owner occupied residents the most. You will tie our hands with any sort of recourse we may have. The vote on the annual budget has never been about the bottom line, it has always been about our control to properly fund the line items as we see fit to sufficiently fund the needs of the Firemen and Fire Department. Traditionally we have voted in favor of the annual budget for over thirty five years. The firemen have their recourse for economic and employment stability issues through their collective bargaining. The 3% provision does little for the fire fighters but totally ties the hands of those paying the bills. You will take what little control we have had in the financial making process of the fire district.

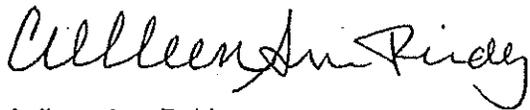
I would like to point out that during testimony in 2009 for changes to our act the Professional Firefighters Association of Connecticut provided the only written testimony where they clearly stated that they were of the belief the tax payers of the district should have full voting privileges. (see attached #1) The intent of the 2009 legislation states an unencumbered "vote on any matter or question at the annual or special meeting of the district." Furthermore, testimony

submitted to the Committee back in 2009, from the Professional Fire Fighters Association of Connecticut, on behalf of 55 fire departments throughout the state, suggests they also had the same intent as to an unencumbered vote. We the tax payers of the district are asking you to do just that, provide back to us our complete and unfettered vote we had prior to May 23, 2013.

In regards to section 1 of HB-5541, when electing and seating commissioners, I would implore that you follow through with our wishes that we hashed out as a District at a Special Meeting on March 19, 2014. (see attached #2) I must admit, it felt really good to vote!

As Americans the most powerful and valuable tool we have is our vote. To diminish a vote's value by placing qualifiers was never the intent of our founding fathers, the Constitution, or what our military fights for on a daily basis. I am asking that you do the right thing and return to us our full, complete, unadulterated vote that we had prior to it being what I consider stolen from us.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Colleen Ann Reidy". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial 'C'.

Colleen Ann Reidy