

*TESTIMONY PRESENTED TO THE PROGRAM REVIEW AND
INVESTIGATIONS COMMITTEE*

OFFICE OF POLICY AND MANAGEMENT

March 14, 2014

RB 5370

An Act Implementing the Recommendations of the Program Review and Investigations
Committee Concerning the Performance of Connecticut's State Parks

The Office of Policy and Management asks that you take no action on RB 5370, An Act Implementing the Recommendations of the Program Review and Investigations Committee Concerning the Performance of Connecticut's State Parks.

Connecticut's state parks are jewels that benefit every citizen. This year we are celebrating the 100th anniversary of our parks, and to commemorate that the Governor has proposed that Connecticut residents be admitted to our state parks for free for one weekend this summer.

The Governor's proposed budget including fringe benefits would provide \$30.6 million for the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation in FY 2015, an increase over this year's \$29.5 million.

Among other things, this bill would require the Commissioner of Energy and Environmental Protection to develop his or her own budget and submit it directly to the General Assembly. Under the State Constitution it is the job of the Governor to propose a balanced budget to the General Assembly - one that weighs all the needs of our citizens against available revenue. At the very least it is inappropriate for executive branch agencies to draft and submit their own budgets to the legislative branch. It would invite budgetary chaos and hurt efforts at transparency. It also raises Constitutional questions.

It is unclear how this would work in practice - it is difficult to envision an appointed official submitting a budget without consulting with the elected chief executive.

Further the bill would dictate that parks be funded by state park revenues. It is one of many bills - all for worthy causes -- before the General Assembly that would create special funds with dedicated revenue, thus limiting the state's flexibility in balancing budgetary needs. Such an array of requirements would harm the ability of government to respond as necessary to developments in the state. It would benefit areas of government - including some parks -- that have stronger constituent voices at the expense of those that do not.

We welcome the opportunity to discuss the needs of the state's parks and ways to enhance them in the long- and short-term. But the remedies in this bill are not acceptable. We urge you to take no action on it.

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